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Why Voting Systems Change:
Electoral Reform in Western Industrialized Countries

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Abstract

This dissertation examines why voting systems have (or have not) changed in western industrialized countries over the past century. Though sharing broadly similar processes of economic and political development from the mid-to-late nineteenth century on, western countries diverged in their choice of voting systems, with most of Europe shifting to proportional voting around World War I, while Anglo-American countries stuck with relative majority or majority voting rules. Past work, both quantitative and ideographic, attributed this result to the effects of culture, or political diversity, or differing patterns of democratization. Using a comparative historical method, and by attending to the historical sequence of events in each case, this study reviews all national efforts for voting system reform in the west over the last century and finds little support for traditional explanations. Instead, this dissertation argues that the strategic position of left parties has been the key factor in all cases.

Utilizing Miliband's concept of 'capitalist democracy,' the dissertation demonstrates how voting systems became contested as a by-product of struggles to gain and define democratic government, and by extension give shape to both economic and social policy through the state. The study explores the question of voting system reform across four broad historical periods: the nineteenth century, the period around World War I, the Cold War, and the 1990s. The findings of the case studies suggest that class has defined the process of voting system reform over different historical periods primarily because of the tensions inherent in first establishing and then maintaining the specifically capitalist form of democracy that emerged in western countries. This tension was fuelled by the rise of left political parties throughout the west in the late nineteenth century and their decline a century later. Left parties championed democracy as a means of turning the state toward the economic and social concerns of the working class, and their

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distinctive form of organization allowed them to mobilize mass levels of support. Throughout the twentieth century the left's expansive 'democratic imaginary' inspired mass support and strong opposition from bourgeois forces and traditional political elites against a backdrop of national and international struggles over the state regulation of capitalism. Voting system reforms emerged again and again as one means of responding to the strategic position of the left and effecting a 'condensation of class forces' in the institutions of the state.

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This work is dedicated to my husband Dann, with love.

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Chapter One: Why Do Voting Systems Change?

Introduction

The voting system is a subset of electoral laws that set out how votes cast in an election will be converted into representation. Throughout the twentieth century western industrialized countries typically used one of three major voting systems - plurality, majority or proportional - for national elections.[1] Political scientists have devoted considerable attention to analyzing how these different voting systems work and an enormous scholarly literature has emerged debating how different voting rules may condition different political effects.[2] But less attention has been paid to why a voting system may change at any given time in any given country. The lack of interest might be explained by the seeming long-term stability of voting system arrangements in most western industrialized countries – from 1920 to 1993 France was the only democracy to change from one system to another. For the most part then political scientists tended to

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[1] Amongst both political actors and academics there are - and have been historically - a variety of conventions used to define how votes are converted into representation in elections. This variety extends to the naming of different 'voting systems,' what is considered to be included in the voting system, and the way in which different voting systems are distinguished from one another. For some, the voting system or 'electoral system' refers to a broad range of issues, including concerns over methods of voter registration, districting, democratic administration, etc. For our purposes, the 'voting system' or 'voting rules' will refer only to the manner in which votes are converted into seats. As for the names of different voting systems, historical and geographical usage will be followed and explained as dealt with in each chapter. For academics, there also exist differences in typologizing the various voting systems (whether they should be considered majority or proportional or mixed, etc.), with some categorizing voting systems on the basis of their constituent components (decision rule, districting, ballot structure, etc.), while others focus more on the results various voting system produce (plural, majority or proportional). For the former view, see André Blais, "The Classification of Electoral Systems," *European Journal of Political Research*, 16 (1988), 99-110; and Louis Massicotte and André Blais, "Mixed electoral systems: a conceptual and empirical survey," *Electoral Studies*, 18 (1999), 341-66. This study will follow the latter approach, which aligns more closely with historical usage and follows the practices of political actors rather than academics. For a review of the basic terms and workings of voting systems, see Appendix One: Voting Systems Terms and Explanations.

[2] For just a few representative works, see Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties*, (London: Menthuen, 1954); David P. Quintal, "The Theory of Electoral Systems", *Western Political Quarterly*, 23 (1970), 752-61; Douglas Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Law*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); Vernon Bogdanor and David Butler (eds.), *Democracy and Elections: Electoral Systems and their Political Consequences*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Gary W. Cox, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

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assume that the choice of voting system somehow reflected the needs of its particular polity, the desires of its citizens, or the ability of existing, self-interested political party elites to prevent consideration of change from emerging as a serious issue. Widespread public indifference toward the voting system, and a general ignorance of its workings or the existence of alternatives, only further convinced political scientists that the origin or alteration of these voting rules was not a terribly important object of study.[3]

But a host of developments in the 1990s forced political scientists to revisit the question of voting system change, including the rapid institutional renewal of the former Soviet bloc countries in Eastern Europe, the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, and the return to civilian and democratic rule throughout Latin America. Voting system reform even came to the more established western democracies - something political scientists had long declared nearly impossible - with change effected for national elections in Italy, New Zealand and Japan, and at the sub-national level in the United Kingdom. Observers quickly noted that political science apparently had little to offer in explaining these recent developments.[4] Fortunately, at a more general level, the discipline had already been in the process of expanding its focus to include questions of institutional development.[5] The revival of interest in the state in the 1970s and 1980s helped fuel new research into the historical origins and development of state institutions and the factors that caused them to change.[6] As political scientists turned their attention

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[3] Some work even managed to credit the voter both with responsibility for the voting system and a general ignorance of its workings. For a recent example, see David Farrell, *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, (Houndsmill: Palgrave, 2001), 42, 183-4. However, a more common response was simply indifference to the issue or a wildly distorted account of proportional systems, particularly from North American political scientists. For an example of the latter, see J.A. Corry, *Democratic Government and Politics, Second Edition*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951), 273-83.

[4] Pippa Norris, "Introduction: The Politics of Electoral Reform," *International Political Science Review*, 16:1 (1995), 4.

[5] This process is neatly summed in David Brian Robertson, "The Return to History and the New Institutionalism in American Political Science," *Social Science History*, 17:1 (Spring 1993), 1-36.

[6] Initially a critique from the left, interest in the state eventually spread across the spectrum in political science. From the left, see Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, (1969; London: Quartet Books, 1973); James O'Connor, *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973); and Nicos

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to voting system reform, they discovered that voting rules were neither as stable nor as uncontested historically as past literature had suggested. And this discovery of the historical complexity of institutional change has complicated efforts to work out a general explanation of voting system change that can apply to more than one country and more than one time period.[7]

The present difficulties facing explorations of voting system reform are readily apparent in the sparse existing literature on the topic. Older academic work had highlighted the influence of social and political diversity, political parties, left-wing political movements and international trading relationships in fuelling voting system reform historically. More recent cross-national quantitative studies have reinforced many of these observations, particularly the role of political parties, left-wing politics, and international trade. This replication of themes from the older literature strongly suggests that these factors are relevant to voting system change, at least historically. However, more recent examples of voting system reform do not appear to have been influenced by such factors in the same way. Instead, recent work has highlighted themes like the de-alignment of traditional political party support, the inherent instabilities of certain voting systems, or shifts in popular attitudes toward democracy. The literature then appears to lack agreement on a generally applicable explanation of voting system change. Yet this is not the only problem. All these studies, whether old or new, or focused on the past or the present, struggle to explain just *why* their particular correlation of factors contributes to voting system reform specifically. In other words, though various factors appear

Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, (1968; London: Verso, 1978). For its incorporation into the mainstream of political science, see Eric A. Nordlinger, *On the Autonomy of the Democratic State*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); P. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C.R. Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," *Political Studies*, XLIV (1996), 936-57.
[7] For recent efforts, see Carles Boix, "Setting the Rules of the Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies," *The American Political Science Review*, 93:3 (September 1999), 609-624; and Josep M. Colomer, "Introduction: Disequilibrium Institutions and Pluralist Democracy," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 13:3 (2001), 235-47.

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strongly associated with voting system change, the relationship between them is unclear and open to multiple interpretations.

The present impasse in these studies might suggest that efforts to fashion a general explanation of voting system change, or indeed any attempt to move beyond mere correlation to arguments of causation, are misguided. Yet there are some striking cross-national trends in voting system reform that strongly suggest otherwise. For instance, while there have been scattered reform efforts across western countries over the last 150 years, successive waves of voting system reform have tended to sweep across these countries at the same time. In fact, in four distinct periods voting system reform has broken out as a cross-national phenomenon, specifically in the late nineteenth century, around WWI, after WWII and most recently in the 1990s. And in all these periods, the question of voting system change has never failed to produce intense disagreement, political competition, and political struggle. There would appear to be something distinctive about the role of the voting system in historic and contemporary political systems but a consensus on just what that is has eluded political science thus far.

This study will take up the challenge of fashioning a general explanation of voting system change across western countries, covering the period from the late nineteenth century to the present. Its objective is to discover whether anything general can be said about the process of voting system reform in western industrialized countries over a period spanning 150 years. Can we uncover some dynamic fuelling change that can be said to apply to all cases? Or will the search for a common explanation of change prove misguided, given the specificity of political cleavages and unique historical struggles that have played out within different countries at different times? Political science has generally been confident that an all-purpose explanation of voting system change is possible and this study is no exception, though the approach that will be taken up here

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will diverge sharply from past practice. While mindful of the important insights from the existing literature but also their methodological and explanatory limits, particularly on questions of causation and historical specificity, this approach will examine voting system reform using a comparative historical method that can develop an overarching explanatory framework in dialogue with the specific contexts of reform in different countries and different periods. This will require a clear periodization of the various reform eras, a specification of the relevant contexts of reform, and an explication of the theoretical concepts to be used in the study. Here attention will be paid to the links between voting system reform and more general struggles over democracy, and critical work on the dynamic tension fuelling struggles over democracy in specifically capitalist societies.

To provide the context for this project, this chapter will set out how political scientists have traditionally pursued a general explanation of voting system reform, then explore the most recent attempts at grappling with the problem, before moving on to develop this new approach to the question. The latter will involve setting out the theoretical and methodological assumptions that will under-gird this work, and a summary of the path that will be taken to accomplish it.

Explaining voting system change: the impoverished past

The earliest works on voting system change were largely descriptive and polemical, written either by defenders of traditional majoritarian voting systems, active members of electoral reform organizations, or reform-oriented academics. Debates tended to centre around which voting system could be said to be the most 'ideal,' and successful reform efforts were either blamed on 'democratic demagogues' or credited to 'the march of progress' and 'the triumph of the people,' depending on the writer's point

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of view.[8] The German historian, Karl Braniaus, proved an exception, arguing that turn of the century and post-WWI shifts to PR were driven by 'minority representation' concerns and 'anti-socialist' sentiment.[9] But it was not until after WWII that academics gave more systematic attention to voting and voting systems, focusing on the mathematical problems of 'sincere' voting, or the causal effect of majority and proportional voting rules on different party systems.[10] Yet none of these approaches had much to say about how and why voting systems changed. Until recently, there was no distinct literature addressing voting system reform. Instead, the question was often relegated to a brief aside in discussions of party systems, the political history of particular countries, democratic reform movements, or debate over democratic institutions.

For most of the post-WWII period the name most associated with the study of voting systems was Maurice Duverger. Duverger's influential *Political Parties* was mostly concerned to map out the historical rise of the modern party form of organization, with his discussion of voting system effects comprising just one chapter in the book. Nonetheless, Duverger's broad generalization that plurality voting systems encourage two party systems while proportional ones produce multiparty systems has remained at the centre of a debate that continues to generate responses in political science more than fifty years later.[11] Right from the start, other researchers took issue with Duverger's causal

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[8] See Walter Baghot, *The English Constitution, Second Edition,* (1872; London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 128-40; Charles Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales: The Development and Operation of the Parliamentary Franchise, 1832-1885,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915); Clarence G. Hoag and George Hallett, Jr., *Proportional Representation,* (New York: Macmillan, 1926); Joseph P. Harris, "The Practical Workings of Proportional Representation in the United States and Canada," Supplement to the *National Municipal Review,* 19:5 (May 1930), 335-83; and F.A. Hermans, *Democracy or Anarchy? A Study of Proportional Representation,* (1941; New York: Johnson Reprint Company, 1972).

[9] As cited in Stein Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties,* (New York: David McKay Company, 1970), 157.

[10] See Kenneth J. Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values,* (New York: Wiley, 1951); Duncan Black, *The Theory of Committees and Elections,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958); and Duverger, *Political Parties.*

[11] See Cox, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*; and Arend Lijphart, "The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws, 1945-85," *American Political Science Review,* 84:2 (June 1990), 481-496.

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arrows, arguing instead that it was the party system that created the voting system and not the other way around.[12] Less noticed in all this debate were Duverger's own qualifications about the origins of voting systems and voting system change. In fact, in the introduction to his discussion of voting systems in *Political Parties* he too recognized the role of the particular party system in influencing the adoption of either majority or proportional voting rules, arguing that "the party system and the electoral system are two realities that are indissolubly linked and even difficult sometimes to separate by analysis..." Furthermore, he characterized the influence of electoral systems as a kind of 'brake' or 'accelerator' that, of themselves, have "no real driving power." Instead, he claimed that ideology and socio-economic structure were "most decisive" in fuelling the rise of parties and, by implication, the adoption of different voting systems.[13] But these were asides, and Duverger did not explicitly set out a theory of voting system change. In fact, his brief treatment of the voting system was at odds with his more comparative historical findings in the book about the workings of political parties, and in no way incorporated into his theoretical observations about the 'contagious' effect of left-wing party organization.

The only other major work in the postwar period to touch on voting system reform was Stein Rokkan's *Citizens, Elections, Parties*. Rokkan dedicated more specific attention to the adoption of different voting systems than Duverger. Furthering an analysis developed with S.M. Lipset, Rokkan argued against the conventional view that the rise of class and class parties were key in the development of most modern party systems, suggesting instead that prior battles over religion and state formation were just as - if not more - influential. These battles impinged on the voting system because they

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[12] For early criticisms of Duverger, see John G. Grumm, "Theories of Electoral Systems," *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 2 (1958), 375; Colin Leys, "Models, Theory and Theory of Political Parties," *Political Studies*, 7 (1959), 127-46; Aaron B. Wildavsky, "A Methodological Critique of Duverger's Political Parties," *The Journal of Politics*, 21:2 (May 1959), 303-318.
[13] Duverger, *Political Parties*, 204-5.

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influenced the shape of the party system, which then had decisive influence on the maintenance or change of voting rules.[14] The combination of national and industrial revolutions across Europe in the late nineteenth century had fuelled the rise of religious, secular, regional, farmer and, eventually, socialist parties. Depending on the order of these developments, and the strength of the various forces, Rokkan argued that voting system reform emerged as a "saddle point" solution to the conflicts generated by such diversity. Thus he essentially reiterated Braunias' view that voting system change in Europe resulted primarily from concerns about minority representation and the rise of socialist parties, though in a more systematic way by highlighting how the "sequence of state formation and institution-building in each polity" played a key role.[15]

Rokkan's observations about voting system reform have been widely cited across different fields of political science, though they too are open to multiple interpretations.[16] For instance, when we turn to the actual details of the specific reforms that Rokkan provides, minority representation concerns appear much less influential than class factors (specifically conservative and liberal elite fears about a potential working class voting majority) on decisions about changing voting systems.[17] While minority representation got political elites talking about different voting rules, such concerns did not of themselves lead to change. The ambiguity was not entirely lost on the author who readily

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[14] Lipset and Rokkan underlined how parties were the authors of voting system arrangements, not the other way around. See S.M. Lipset and S. Rokkan, "Cleavage structures, party systems and voter alignments: An introduction," in S.M. Lipset and S. Rokkan (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, (New York: Free Press, 1967), 30.

[15] Here Rokkan was reproducing a great deal from his work with Lipset, though expanding his discussion of its implications for the voting system. See Lipset and Rokkan, "Cleavage structures, party systems and voter alignments: An introduction," 30-4; and Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, 155-7.

[16] Actually, Rokkan himself offered a number of explanations of voting system change, ranging from how ethnic or religious diversity fueled multi-party competition to how the size of a country may impact on the need for elites to get along in the face of external threats. Peter Katzenstein took up the latter insight arguing in a brief aside that smaller countries whose economies were more open to international competition were more likely to adopt PR. See Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, 88-91; and Peter J. Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets*, (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1985).

[17] Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, 157-9.

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admitted that the "extent of minority entrenchment varied greatly from country to country, and the pressures for proportionalization were nowhere exactly the same." It appears that despite his impressive distillation of a mass of historical and quantitative data concerning the origins of European party systems, Rokkan was less confident about his grasp of the historical pressures that shaped the "crucial decisions" affecting suffrage and voting systems. In the end, he called for more historical research into these areas, suggesting it was a "high priority area for comparative research."[18] But comparativists did not take his advice, and little serious historical or comparative work on voting system reform emerged over the following decades.

Neither Duverger nor Rokkan made theorizing voting system reform a central part of their work, despite some striking asides. And given the apparent stability of voting system arrangements across western industrialized countries after WWII few scholars paid much attention to the question. Instead, most simply extended the cultural modernization theories or actor-centred models then applied to party systems to cover questions of voting system choice or change, though largely in an *ad hoc* manner.[19] For scholars from the cultural modernization school, voting system choices represented institutional responses to the breadth and depth of social cleavages, with homogenous, adversarial polities opting for plurality while plural, consensus-oriented countries chose proportional representation (PR).[20] In these schemes voting system change was largely a functional response, an attempt to establish a new political equilibrium amid social

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[18] Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties,* 168.

[19] Pippa Norris utilizes a similar typology in her recent book *Electoral Engineering*, breaking up the multitude of modern-era approaches to studying party and institutional effects in political science into two broad schools, cultural modernization and rational choice institutionalism. Though her volume is focused more on the impacts of institutional change rather than explanations of institutional change specifically, this breakdown of the literature is still quite useful for our purposes and I have adapted it for use here. For a review of her approach, see Pippa Norris, *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), specifically chapter one.

[20] Vernon Bogdanor, "Conclusion: Electoral Systems and Party Systems," in V. Bogdanor and D. Butler (eds.), *Democracy and Elections: Electoral Systems and their Political Consequences,* 252; Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 306.

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upheaval or a response to long-term social changes.[21] Actor-centred approaches, by contrast, highlighted the interests of political elites in maintaining or attempting to change voting rules. For some, drawing on historical and contemporary case studies, it was simply common sense that parties would seek to maintain institutions favourable to them.[22] Others drew on more formal theory about party behaviour, utilizing Anthony Downs' work on the strategic dimension of party competition or insights from social and public choice theory.[23] More often than not, scholars pragmatically drew from both 'schools' in rationalizing the use of particular voting systems in different locales.[24] But in all these cases, the question of voting system change appeared fleetingly, a brief aside in studies concerned primarily with something else.[25] Though useful observations were made, they remained largely anecdotal and unproven. And this was the state of the discipline when, to the surprise of political scientists generally, a new spate of voting system reform broke out in the 1990s.

Explaining voting system change today: the scramble for theory

The events surrounding the dramatic voting system reforms of the early 1990s, specifically the replacement of long-entrenched national voting systems in New Zealand, Italy and Japan, quickly demonstrated the poverty of existing generalizations about voting system change. As analysts tried to make sense of the developments, they found

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[21] Rein Taagepera and Matthew Soberg Shugart, *Seats and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 234; see also 62-3.

[22] Andrew McLaren Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe,* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), 4; Bo Sarlvik, "Scandanavia," in Bogdanor and Butler (eds.), *Democracy and Elections,* 123.

[23] Ronald Rogowski, "Trade and the Variety of Democratic Institutions," *International Organization,* 41:2 (Spring 1987), 203-23; Kathleen Bawm, "The Logic of Institutional Preferences: German Electoral Law as a Social Choice Outcome," *American Journal of Political Science,* 37:4 (November 1993), 965-89.

[24] For instance, see Bogdanor, "Conclusion: Electoral Systems and Party Systems," and Taagepera and Shugart, *Seats and Votes.*

[25] A notable exception was Rogowski's work on trade and democratic institutions, which did take voting system change as its central research problem. See Rogowski, "Trade and the Variety of Democratic Institutions," 203-23.

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they had to discard one truism after another. Pippa Norris suggested that typical political science characterizations of voting system reform as involving a "judicious and careful calculation about the most appropriate means to achieve certain ends" did not square with recent events. More realistically, she claimed, new systems were "born kicking and screaming into the world out of a messy, incremental compromise between contending factions battling for survival, determined by power politics."[26] Researchers began to question whether institutional reform required a 'crisis' to emerge, suggesting instead that reform might be seen as a continuous and ongoing process, a part of 'normal' politics as well, while others even challenged the long accepted wisdom that voting systems were particularly stable institutions and resistant to change.[27] But why voting systems *specifically* had become such popular vehicles for reform has produced less consensus.

The gap between traditional academic explanations of voting systems change and the pace of contemporary reforms produced a scramble for effective theory or theories to explain these more recent events. Yet despite the call for new approaches to the study of institutional reform, recent work on voting system change remains rooted in the traditional categories of cultural modernization theories and/or actor-centred models. Contemporary cultural modernization approaches include behavioural models that use surveys to highlight changing public attitudes and political party organization amidst a shift from an industrial to post-industrial form of society, or functionalist models that employ positivist measures of voting system performance. By contrast, today's actor-centred models are primarily logic-driven rational choice approaches that use quantitative or historical data to generate testable propositions about when and how voting systems might change. And as before, some practitioners combine both approaches. Only the

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[26] Pippa Norris, "Introduction: The Politics of Electoral Reform," 3-4.
[27] Patrick Dunleavy and Helen Margetts, "Understanding the Dynamics of Electoral Reform," *International Political Science Review*, 16:1 (1995), 11; Farrell, *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, 179.

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traditional cleavage models appear to have been abandoned, as fewer and fewer analysts accept that a post-industrial polity still produces anchored political preferences.

The most common cultural modernization approach has focused on how the transition from industrial to post-industrial society has contributed to a shift in social values from material to post-material concerns, leading to a decline in organized cleavages and a de-alignment of traditional party systems.[28] For some, the continuing de-alignment of western party systems was potentially the most important factor contributing to voting system reform in all the affected countries.[29] Across western countries, the traditionally dominant parties witnessed a drop in their combined support in the period between 1960 and 1990, with third parties rising from insignificant levels to around 20-25% of the national vote.[30] But de-alignment on its own hardly indicates when or where reform will occur, if at all. In fact, de-alignment is occurring just about everywhere, but voting system reform is not. A number of analysts try to get around this by explaining change as the product of long term factors (de-alignment) and short term factors (scandal, corruption).[31] Unfortunately, this hardly improves things, as the short term factors most often cited (for instance, corruption and scandal in Italy and Japan) have long been

[28] See various contributors to R.J. Dalton, S.C. Flanagan, and P.A. Beck (editors), *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies: Realignment or Dealignment?*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[29] See Dunleavy and Margetts, "Understanding the Dynamics of Electoral Reform," 24-5; David Denemark, "Choosing MMP in New Zealand: Explaining the 1993 Electoral Reform," in M.S. Shugart and M.P. Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 71-5; Mark Donovan, "The Politics of Electoral Reform in Italy," *International Political Science Review*, 16:1 (1995), 51-2; Raymond Christensen, "Electoral Reform in Japan: How it Was Enacted and Changes it May Bring," *Asian Survey*, 34:7 (July 1994), 594-9; and Eugene L. Wolfe, "Japanese Electoral and Political Reform: Role of the Young Turks," *Asian Survey*, 35:12 (December 1995), 1070-3.

[30] For a discussion of these developments, see Mark Donovan and David Broughton, "Party System Change in Western Europe: Positively Political," in D. Broughton and M. Donovan (eds.), *Changing Party Systems in Western Europe*, (London: Pinter, 1999), 255-74.

[31] Norris, "Introduction: The Politics of Electoral Reform," 7; Matthew Soberg Shugart, "'Extreme' Electoral Systems and the Appeal of the Mixed-Member Alternative," in Shugart and Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?*, 26-8.

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recognized and decried by just about everyone, without being eliminated. It is not clear why they should suddenly contribute to institutional reform now.

Another approach recognizes the importance of de-alignment but also highlights how parties themselves have changed. Contemporary political parties tend to have fewer members, and more streamlined internal democracy. The parties also campaign differently, eschewing volunteer door-to-door voter contact in favour of professional telephone contact, paid polling, copious amounts of radio and television advertising, and leader-oriented appeals. But, again, as this trend is happening nearly everywhere, it is not clear how these changes contribute to voting system reform in particular countries. Margetts and Dunleavy argue that these changes signal a larger global convergence around how politics is done. They point out that all the voting system changes moved in a similar mixed-system direction, something they credit to an increasingly globalized public sphere. Basically, they suggest that today's general public is better educated and informed, more aware than ever about how other countries do politics and what potential reforms could be taken up.[32] The end of the Cold War has allowed greater criticism to emerge about the workings of liberal democracies, and a process of international 'policy learning' has affected both public and party views.[33] Margetts and Dunleavy's 'globalization' thesis offers some provocative, but largely *ad hoc* assertions about our increasingly small world which leaves much unexplained. Specifically, they fail to identify how voters effect influence over the process, why parties seemingly cannot maintain control over it, or why current public dissatisfaction should move in an institutional rather than policy direction. To suggest, as they do in later work, that a new

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[32] Dunleavy and Margetts, "Understanding the Dynamics of Electoral Reform," 25-7.
[33] Patrick Dunleavy and Helen Margetts, "The United Kingdom: Reforming the Westminster Model," in J. Colomer (ed.), *Handbook of Electoral System Choice,* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004), 301.

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process of modernization and convergence is underway with the decline of the Cold War is hardly more illuminating.[34]

Another cultural modernization approach relies less on behavioural data to make its case than an exploration of the internal dynamic of the voting systems themselves. Matthew Shugart has designed a model that claims to differentiate between 'efficient' and 'extreme' voting systems as a first step toward explaining why some systems change. He suggests that "electoral systems that are 'extreme' ... contain within themselves the pre-existing conditions that generate reformist pressures." However, being 'inherently prone to reform' does not guarantee that any system will be reformed. Reform requires the existence of both these inherent 'extreme' tendencies and some 'triggering event,' a contingency. In examining the recent examples of voting system reform, Shugart holds that all were 'extreme' voting systems that finally succumbed to reform under pressure of different contingencies: corruption, voter dissatisfaction, scandal, etc. He then proceeds to categorize different voting systems as either 'efficient' or 'extreme' by measuring their performance against a number of indicators divided along two dimensions, inter-party and intra-party. The inter-party dimension establishes a continuum ranging from single party majority governments elected with well under a majority of votes at one end to coalition governments formed amongst many parties at the other. The intra-party dimension does the same for the question of how individual legislators secure election - through highly personalistic networks at one extreme to complete reliance on party lists at the other. The midpoint on each dimension then represents the most 'efficient' spot.[35]

Perhaps not surprisingly, Shugart's model discovers pre-reform Japan, New Zealand and Italy to be utilizing 'extreme' voting systems. Their 'extreme' features,

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[34] P. Dunleavy and H. Margetts, "From Majoritarian to Pluralist Democracy? Electoral Reform in Britain since 1997," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 13:3 (2001), 310-11.
[35] Shugart, "'Extreme' Electoral Systems and the Appeal of the Mixed-Member Alternative," 25-7.

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according to Shugart, meant that they failed to "connect government formation to policy-based electoral majorities" leading to low levels of 'electoral efficiency' for voters.[36] Mixed-systems then became a popular solution because they helped reconnect government performance with voter preferences by balancing the need for clearly accountable governing coalitions with a degree of direct politician accountability via single member ridings.[37] Shugart essentially combines a pluralist understanding of what drives the polity – citizens – with a functionalist understanding of political systems and their need to establish and maintain 'equilibrium.'[38] The problem is that Shugart's model produces absurd results, despite matching its 'extreme' categorization with the reforming countries. This is because as a predictive model it fails to explain why reform did not come at any other moment in the long use of these 'extreme' voting systems. For instance, one of his 'extreme' voting systems, New Zealand, apparently 'prone to reformist pressures,' lasted 140 years with only one break (a four year trial with the alternative vote between 1908-1912). Even if we limit ourselves to that country's most 'extreme' phase, the period after the abolition of the upper house in 1950, we still have four decades of largely uncontroversial use of the traditional voting system.[39] Voting rules were more regularly criticized in Italy and Japan but, again, both persisted with their systems for nearly half a century, nearly the whole of democratic experience for both nations. It is hard to agree with Shugart that various systems are 'prone to change' when

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[36] Shugart, "'Extreme' Electoral Systems and the Appeal of the Mixed-Member Alternative," 28.

[37] Shugart, "'Extreme' Electoral Systems and the Appeal of the Mixed-Member Alternative," 26.

[38] Despite his concern for methodological rigor, Shugart appears rather uncritical about how institutions actually work in practice. For instance, he claims that single member ridings increase politician accountability to the electorate. Setting aside the question of whether this true or not, Shugart's approach to measuring this is suspect as he makes no provision to factor constituency size, or the voter-representative ratio, into his findings. Surely very large ridings, like the 500,000+ congressional districts in the United States, would fail in any measure of accountability and have to be judged 'extreme'? Instead, the US, along with Canada, Australia, Denmark, Germany, and the UK all appear closest to the two-dimensional 'mid-point' of his electoral efficiency graph. See Shugart, "'Extreme' Electoral Systems and the Appeal of the Mixed-Member Alternative,"43.

[39] Keith Jackson and Alan McRobie, *New Zealand Adopts Proportional Representation*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 19-20.

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they have, in fact, survived most of the modern democratic era. Nor do Shugart's 'trigger' contingencies save the analysis - most were longstanding problems, well-known and seemingly intractable. Given these difficulties, the predictive capacity of Shugart's model would appear to be nil. Yet this does not exhaust the problems with his approach. Shugart assumes that voters ultimately judge the 'efficiency' of any arrangement and thus fuel any change but nowhere provides any evidence of where or how this occurs.[40]

Cultural modernization approaches assume that larger social and economic changes affect how people view politics and the efficacy of the political system yet they tend to provide largely actor-less accounts of change. Rational choice work on institutional change, the other currently popular framework being used to understand voting system reform, remedies this problem by linking change directly to the interests of political actors, specifically political parties. Since 1993 various authors have utilized rational choice assumptions to explain why political parties would be interested in or agree to change the rules of the electoral game, with various - sometimes conflicting - results. Some have claimed that voting system change occurs to maximize the legislative representation of a particular party, or protect and enhance individual political careers, or respond to trade imperatives, or even to save the political system as a whole from ruin.[41] There is less agreement about just why institutions, the voting system specifically, become the target of such efforts. In fact, there is considerable debate within rational choice about whether institutional rules are 'sticky' and should be considered either less

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[40] Katznelson's methodological work can offer some insight into the problematic nature of Shugart's approach, particularly where he argues that quantitative comparative method typically "decomposes cases into variables which are analyzed and compared via multivariate techniques, running the risk of slicing and dicing them so as to destroy the complex integrity of historical instances." See Ira Katznelson, "Reflections on History, Method, and Political Science," *The Political Methodologist: Newsletter of the Political Methodology Section, American Political Science Association*, 8:1 (Fall 1997), 13.

[41] See Rogowski, "Trade and the variety of democratic institutions," 203-23; Kathleen Bawm, "The Logic of Institutional Preferences: German Electoral Law as a Social Choice Outcome," 965-89; and F.E. Lehoucq, "Institutional Change and Political Conflict: Evaluating Alternative Explanations of Electoral Reform in Costa Rica," *Electoral Studies*, 14:1 (1995), 23-45.

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or equally likely to be challenged than other political terrain (i.e. specific policies).[42] Some, like Colomer, argue that politicians and political parties want to keep institutional rules in place that benefit them, and will only agree to change rules when they fear that maintaining them will cause them to lose out on a potentially perpetual basis. Specifically he cites the rise of a multi-party situation as the key factor driving most historical shifts to PR worldwide (though he qualifies this generalization with a host of historical caveats). Boix is more historically and ideologically specific, citing the threat of strong left-wing parties in Europe in the early twentieth century as fuelling voting system change.[43]

Rational choice approaches succeed admirably in designating the agents of voting system change – political parties – but offer rather meagre explanations for their actions, or the larger social, political or economic forces that might be influencing their efforts. Colomer suggests that parties are the driving force for change but we get no sense of what forces are driving the parties. It is as if these rational actors exist in a kind of social or historical vacuum. Boix gets more specific in at least identifying socialist parties as the key competitive threat motivating reform around WWI but we get little sense as to *why* socialists more than other parties are a threat that motivates voting system reform. The 'why' question is missing because rational choice models (much like cultural modernization theories) rely on functionalist assumptions; they "deduce origins from [the] consequences" that flow from institutional arrangements, rather than investigate their historical development. In other words, they read back from the consequences of historical change to establish what could have caused rational actors to desire such

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[42] See the debate in a special issue of the *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, particularly Gerard Alexander, "Institutions, Path Dependence, and Democratic Consolidations," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 13:3 (2001), 249-70; and Kenneth A. Shepsle, "A Comment on Institutional Change," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 13:3 (2001), 321-25.

[43] Josep Colomer, "The Strategy and History of Electoral System Choice," in Colomer (ed.), *Handbook of Electoral System Choice*, 3-73; Carles Boix, "Setting the Rules of the Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies," 609-624.

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results. But this is a flawed approach, as sometimes individual intentions do not produce their desired outcomes, and the objectives of historical players may not be clear from the results of change.[44] Indeed, even if we do know what participants are trying to accomplish, this does not necessarily exhaust all the potential causal forces driving change. Thus rational choice, in its bid to come up with an all-purpose explanation of institutional change, leaves too much – individual and group intentions, the specific contexts of different historical periods, the economic and historical dynamics conditioning what appears 'rational' – unexplained. To suggest, as rational choice accounts do, that institutional changes are the product of party self-interest hardly exhausts what can be said about the successive waves of voting system reform that followed the two world wars and cropped up again in the 1990s. Yet cultural modernization explanations suffer in a similar way, as party de-alignment only begs the question of why voters across western countries are suddenly changing their minds about parties.

The limits of the current work on voting system reform stem in large part from an overweening reliance on cross-national quantitative methods, an approach that critics charge cannot adequately link theories of causation with empirical evidence. Recent quantitative work has generated more systematic evidence for what were essentially asides in the older literature, finding strong correlations between increases in the number of parties and moves toward voting system reform, particularly for the historical cases. For those focusing on more recent reforms, party de-alignment has also been strongly associated with moves toward reconsiderations of the voting system. But these correlations do not constitute an explanation of the events, regardless of how often they are replicated. As Rueschemeyer *et al* note in nuanced critique of the strengths and

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[44] Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 952.

weaknesses of such methods, these sorts of quantitative findings can - at best - only rule out generalizations at odds with them. As concerns voting system reform this might allow recent quantitative work to rule out explanations that do not recognize some role for parties in the process. But determining just what that role is cannot be ascertained through quantitative methods alone. Rueschemeyer *et al* point out that "any correlation – however reliably repeated and replicated – depends for its meaning on the context supplied by theory and accepted knowledge ..." In the end, they underline that "quantitative findings are compatible with a wide range of explanatory accounts ... [and ultimately the result] does not determine the choice between various theoretical accounts that are compatible with it."[45] Thus, the theoretical explanations that accompany cross-national studies are not 'proven' by their findings. They are merely conjectures about how different variables that have been shown to co-exist are related. To distinguish between rival theories requires the very thing that such studies lack by design, an investigation of particular historical contexts, because only an engagement with the specific historical events can test how well a theory explains what happened.

The weak link between the quantitative evidence and the various theories that purport to explain what it means leads to two inter-related problems: we have no basis upon which to choose amongst the theories (whether one is for cultural modernization or rational choice appears more a matter of taste than assessing their competing explanatory power), and the concepts undergirding the theories remain ideal-type constructions, untested by reference to actual historical conditions. The latter concern becomes readily apparent when we examine how modern work relies on a host of ahistorical, untested concepts, particularly with reference to the economy and democracy.[46] But this problem

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[45] Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 29-30.

[46] In conventional work, the 'economy' is understood largely in the orthodox neoclassical terms of basic economics textbooks, operating across time and space in fundamentally the same manner, driven by unseen forces, stages, or laws. Differences across time or space are merely differences in scope – these represent

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is compounded by the fact that such concepts are typically implicit in the work, masked by positivist methods that claim only to capture what can be seen, heard and measured. To address these limitations we need to develop our concepts explicitly and in dialogue with the historical events they purport to explain.

Modern work on voting system change is at an impasse, seemingly unable to move beyond its theoretical and methodological commitments. Despite generating some promising correlations about the role of parties and party de-alignment in fuelling voting system change, it cannot effectively sort out the competing, sometimes contradictory, theories about what this evidence means. To get beyond these difficulties, we must combine our current insights with older traditions of historical enquiry, turn to new sources of 'evidence,' both to test current theories and concepts and develop new ones.

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manifestations of different levels or stages of development in an unfolding process of modernization. Differing national or regional economic performance is explained by adherence to or departures from proper economic policies (typically 'liberalization') and perhaps technical or sequencing errors in government regulation of the market. Meanwhile 'democracy' is understood in Schumpeterian terms, as an elite-driven contest for government, underpinned by a basic social consent for government and the disparities produced by the market. The American influence on the concept is unmistakable – to the extent the countries approximate American institutions and practices they are generally deemed more democratic than those that do not. Reliance on such concepts limits what can be said about the reform process by taking the disputes over the economy or democracy essentially out of the equation. For an early treatment of the American bias in mainstream political science understandings of democracy see R. Looker, "Comparative Politics: Methods or Theories?" in P. Lewis *et al*, *The Practice of Comparative Politics, Second Edition*, (New York: Longman, 1978), 308-13.

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A new approach to explaining voting system change

Political science has generated a host of plausible observations about voting systems that have the ring of common sense about them. The political culture distinction between 'adversarial' and 'consensus' democracies does appear to mirror a divide between plurality and PR use. Countries with high levels of cultural, religious or ethnic pluralism do seem to have opted for PR. A shift from an essentially two-party system to a multi-party system does appear to match up with instances of voting system change. The recent trend toward a de-alignment of traditional party voting patterns across western countries is a plausible rationale for new interest in voting system arrangements. And so on. But these observations are not sufficient as explanations of just how and why voting systems changed in any given place at any given time. For instance, the adversarial/consensus divide may be the *result* of the voting system change, not its cause. And the existence of social diversity, party system expansion and voter de-alignment still require an explanation of just how these factors led to the change of any specific voting system. Indeed, the existence of such factors long predated the adoption of new voting rules in most cases, leaving exactly what determined when they had their effect unclear. Thus to explain change, we require more than a 'constant conjunction' of factors, we need to know something about the specific contexts within which such factors interact.

This study will attempt to address the past shortcomings in the study of voting system reform and fashion a better explanation of these processes of change by utilizing a comparative historical method.[47] We need to know more about the specifics of the reform

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[47] This dissertation falls somewhere between the traditions of historical sociology and comparative politics. Specifically, it would fit within what David Collier has described as a distinct school of 'comparative historical method' in political science, committed to "systematic qualitative comparison that often involves a number of nations and evaluates each national case over a number of time periods," combining "carefully thought-out comparison with an appreciation of historical context..." Collier cites work by R. Bendix, B. Moore, T. Skocpol and G. Luebbert as examples, but we could easily add Perry Anderson, Geoff Eley and E.P. Thompson, among others, to the list. For a review of these disciplines, see David Collier, "The Comparative Method: Two Decades of Change," in D. Rustow and K. Erikson (eds.), *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives*, (New York: Harper and Collins, 1991), 14-5; Ira Katznelson,

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process in different countries at different times to build a theoretical model and then test it against the cases. This will involve attention both to the differing geographic and temporal aspects of context, but also to the crucial role of *sequence* in mapping historical events. As Rueschemeyer *et al* note, "historical research gives insight into sequences and their relations to surrounding structural conditions, and that is indispensable for developing valid causal accounts."[48] Tracking the sequence of historical events is one way to gauge the interaction of various factors on a specific result. For example, some claim that the historical sequence involved in extending the franchise had significant effects on the nature of political competition that subsequently emerged, with early extenders generating moderate competitors while late extenders produced more radical parties. At the same time, our historical approach must be strongly *comparative* if it is to "get beyond history's bias toward the particularity of events" and aid in the development of historically-informed theoretical generalizations. Country-specific approaches to exploring voting system change have tended to over-play the uniqueness of their reform process. Only a broad comparative approach can sort out the country-specific factors from the cross-national influences. Finally, our attention to context and comparison must be informed by a clearly set-out framework of theoretical and conceptual ideas with which to interpret the myriad of potential facts.[49] Thus context, comparison and conceptual clarity combine in a potentially powerful approach to social enquiry, one uniquely well-suited to the question at hand. To demonstrate this, we'll sketch out how

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"Structure and Configuration in Comparative Politics," in M.I. Lichbach and A.S. Zuckerman (eds.), *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture and Structure,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 81-112; Dennis Smith, *The Rise of Historical Sociology,* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); and W.L. Newman, *Social Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods, Fourth Edition,* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), 382-7.

[48] Rueschemeyer *et al* go further, claiming "[c]ausal analysis is inherently sequence analysis." See Rueschemeyer *et al, Capitalist Development and Democracy,* 4. Nor are they alone in highlighting the importance of historical sequence analysis. See also Jeffrey Haydu, "Making Use of the Past: Time Periods as Cases to Compare and as Sequences of Problem Solving," *The American Journal of Sociology,* 104:2 (September 1998), 339-71.

[49] Rueschemeyer *et al, Capitalist Development and Democracy,* 4.

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such an historical comparative approach can be applied specifically to the study of voting system change, highlighting the specific contexts relevant to the subject, and clarifying the concepts, periodization and theoretical framework that will be used.

Taking up historical contexts is a multi-sided project. On the one hand, it involves identifying all the relevant episodes of change, a fairly straightforward process. In western industrialized countries voting systems started to change in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, though mostly at the sub-national level, with a scattering of national reforms before WWI, a few more during the war, followed by a flood of change when the fighting ended. From there, reform efforts largely died off, revived only in the period immediately following WWII, and then much later in the 1990s. But historical context also extends to identifying relevant related events that informed, shaped and resulted from these efforts. In other words, we must link voting system reforms concretely to the larger historical processes they are related to and provide a theoretical framework within which to understand them.

For an appreciation of proper contexts and historical sequences relevant to an exploration of voting system change we can draw on older work in the literature, specifically contributions from Duverger and Rokkan. Though neither applied an historical method to the voting system *per se*, both were historically-minded in explaining and theorizing about political developments. In *Political Parties*, Duverger tracked the rise of party organization as an historical phenomenon where left parties developed innovative structures to redress inequalities in political competition, particularly around financing their efforts. As the left increased their support into the twentieth century, their political competitors took note and mimicked a great deal of their organizational structure. What Duverger demonstrated was that political party forms took shape in response to material needs and competitive challenges; they were historical

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responses to changing social and political conditions.[50] Curiously, Duverger did not extend this approach to understanding the development of voting systems, even though he dealt with them in the same book. However, his approach can certainly be extended to cover voting system change as well. Rokkan also utilized an historical approach, though he paid particular attention to the historical sequence of political, economic and social developments. Basically Rokkan argued that party systems varied across Europe depending on the order of change in national, religious and industrial terms. For instance, in some countries religious disputes were settled before the rise of industry and as such religion did not emerge as a political cleavage (Britain), while in others it remained relevant and political (Netherlands).[51] Yet Rokkan did not apply his approach to the voting system, despite a host of asides on the topic. But here too there is no reason not to extend Rokkan's approach to cover voting system change.

Duverger and Rokkan offer us a starting point in exploring voting system reform historically by highlighting how political change is often the result of competitive interaction informed by particular contexts, in this case competition between opposed political forces, and that the order of related political events is important in influencing the results. Unlike rational choice, understanding the specific context here matters if we are to correctly grasp what is going on. Simply put, we should explore voting system reform as an historically contingent result of political struggles, affected by the order of related political events. At a minimum, this would involve exploring how voting system reform emerged as an issue in these different periods, who promoted it, what they expected to accomplish, who they were reacting to, and what factors aided or limited their efforts. But it will also involve an appreciation of the larger context of events that may have influenced these efforts. For instance, Duverger also underlines the importance of a

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[50] See Duverger, *Political Parties*, chapters one to three.
[51] See the relevant sections of Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties*.

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particular kind of political competition, specifically the perceived political threat from the left in the form of mass-based, socialist and labour parties.[52] Turning to voting system reform, others have certainly highlighted the role of the left in championing and inspiring voting system change. Duverger and Rokkan both link the influence of the political left to the struggles for an extended franchise and democratization, specifically in the period around WWI, with Rokkan connecting voting system change to democratization as well. [53] Here too subsequent work has linked voting system reform to struggles for minimally democratic government. What we have, then, is voting system reform regularly linked both to left parties and struggles over democracy.

On the face of it, these links appear plausible. If we plot the various struggles for voting system reform on a time-line, there is a striking correlation between these reform efforts, the advance or crisis of leftwing parties, and the key breakthroughs, restorations, or challenges to democracy. For instance, the shift of most western countries to different voting systems around WWI tended to coincide with struggles for or against the entrenchment of minimally democratic government. The re-adoption of PR in Germany, France and Italy after WWII was part of the struggle over the democratic restoration process in all three countries. And the successful voting system reforms in the 1990s in New Zealand, Japan, Italy and the UK (sub-nationally) accompanied record lows in public opinion about democratic legitimacy. It would appear that something similar is happening across these different countries at the same time and - perhaps - across time. As such, it makes sense to pursue our exploration of voting system reform in the context of historic struggles involving the left, and specifically left parties, and the nature of democracy.

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[52] Duverger, *Political Parties*, 4, 24-5.
[53] Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, 157-8.

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If we are going to explore voting system reform as part of a larger struggle over democracy, one where the role of left parties is key, and there appears to be compelling evidence already that such an approach is defensible, then we'll need to establish more clearly what we understand by 'democracy' and the 'left.' For democracy, this will involve both defining what democracy is in an institutional way (elections, responsible government, etc.) and taking up the debate over what factors bring about, maintain, or threaten democratic rule. For the left, this will involve specifying the relevant actors, the broad historical project they represent, and how different understandings of class can lead to different interpretations of what the left has represented and currently represents. But it will also involve setting out a theoretical understanding of why the fate of democracy and the left appear to be related.

There has been much debate about what particular combination of factors amount to a minimally democratic order historically. Some commentators rather sloppily assume that 'democracy' arrives sometime in the mid-nineteenth century across the west as the franchise is gradually opened up and/or responsible government is achieved.[54] Others hold to rather strict conditions that have the effect of placing the moment of democratization well after the point when common sense dictates it has arrived. Thus we have Samuel Huntington marking the start of the first wave of democracy beginning in the US in the early 1800s because most men have the vote, while Goran Therborn declares that the US cannot qualify as a democracy until the 1960s due to the systematic

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[54] Some scholars see democracy where the suffrage has been extended to all working men or where the legislature controls the executive. But, as Klaus von Beyme points out, neither accomplishment on its own assures even a minimally democratic government. In fact, he accuses much of political science of confusing the process of parliamentarization, or the ability of legislatures to control executives, with a process of democratization. The former struggle, which dominated the nineteenth century, usually facilitated legislative control of public finance but as very few people could typically vote it was hardly a 'democratic' victory. See K. von Beyme, *Parliamentary Democracy: Democratization, Destabilization, Reconsolidation, 1789-1999,* (Houndsmill: Macmillan, 2000), 26.

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discrimination against blacks.[55] Neither approach is helpful. What we need to capture is the point at which elite rule, premised on a very small number of people or social group, gives way to rule premised on a mass base. This would, at a minimum, involve at least three conditions: an extension of the suffrage to an effectively mass level (though not necessarily full suffrage), legislative control of the executive, and the existence of conditions conducive to free and fair elections. Nineteenth century reforms often involved one or two of these conditions but not all three. Yet all three must be in place to meaningful credit a government with minimally 'democratic' credentials.[56] The academic confusion about when democracy can be said to have been introduced in different western countries is one reason scholars have tended to miss the connection between struggles over democracy and voting system reform.

There is no more consensus on the 'causes' of democracy either.[57] One of the oldest views linked the arrival and maintenance of democracy with class factors, specifically the increasing wealth or modernization of a society.[58] But this came under challenge in the 1970s as researchers studying Latin America suggested that authoritarian government – not democracy – was more conducive to modernization because it could better resist public pressures for immediate consumption and wealth redistribution.[59]

[55] See Samuel P. Huntington, "Democracy's Third Wave," in L. Diamond and M. Plattner (eds.), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy, Second Edition*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3; and Goran Therborn, "The Rise of Capital and the Rise of Democracy," *New Left Review*, 103 (May-June 1977), 11, 16-7.

[56] Of course, some see such developments as one in a series of steps toward democracy, as part of a larger democratization process. But such a view is teleological, reading out of later accomplishments a seemingly inevitable progression from various component events. Lost in such accounts is the sense of the struggle for democracy, how these efforts intersected with other social struggles, and the fact that results other than democracy were also possible. For an example of this piecemeal approach to democracy, see Ruth Berins Collier, *Paths Toward Democracy*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[57] For a concise review of the literature, see Georg Sorenson, *Democracy and Democratization*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

[58] For a recent review of this debate see Larry Diamond, "Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered," in G. Marks and L. Diamond (eds.), *Reexamining Democracy*, (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992), 93-139.

[59] This debate is brought up to date in Scott Mainwaring and Anibal Perez-Linan, "Levels of Democracy and Development: Latin American Exceptionalism, 1945-1996," *Comparative Political Studies*, 36:9 (November 2003), 1031-1067.

Others pointed to culture, suggesting that religion (Protestants more than Catholics) or particular national experiences of statehood (the US and Switzerland) produced values conducive to democracy, though no satisfactory way of measuring the relationship of cultural attributes to democratic practice has been universally accepted.[60] Another approach focused on social structure, suggesting that the rising bourgeoisie were keen on democracy to further their economic restructuring of these modernizing societies. But this too was challenged by others who claimed, with some historical justification, that bourgeois forces actually regularly resisted democracy.[61] At this point it would appear that analysts have abandoned attempts to formulate a fixed model or law of democratization, preferring instead to talk of how various pre-conditions for democracy then interact with choices made by individuals, particularly elites. But most of the recent work employing such an approach remains rather vague as to just why regimes may move in a democratic direction.[62] Some participants in this discussion have even suggested there are no preconditions for democracy "other than a willingness on the part of a nation's elite to attempt to govern by democratic means."[63]

The contemporary democratization literature suffers from many of the same methodological problems as the current voting system reform work, an over-reliance of quantitative methods and weak, ahistorical concepts. Most characterize democracy narrowly as a system where the public can choose its government through elections.

[60] For a defense of the culture view, see Gabriel A. Almond, "The Intellectual History of the Civic Culture Concept," G. Almond and S. Verba (eds.), *The Civic Culture Revisited*, (1980; Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1989), 1-36; for a critique, see Carole Pateman, "The Civic Culture: A Philosophical Critique," in Almond and Verba (eds.), *The Civic Culture Revisited*, 57-101; see also Sorenson, *Democracy and Democratization*, 26-7.

[61] For the view that the bourgeoisie were key to democracy see Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); for a response critical of the bourgeoisie's role see Therborn, "The Rise of Capital and the Rise of Democracy."

[62] Sorenson, *Democracy and Democratization*, 27-8.

[63] Larry Diamond, "Can the Whole World Become Democratic? Democracy, Development and International Policies," Center for the Study of Democracy, University of California, Irvine, paper 03'05, 2003.

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While few would deny that much activity in contemporary democracies is concerned with this process, historical and contemporary struggles over democracy have involved a much broader set of issues. Yet the democratization literature seldom confronts the weakness and inaccuracy of its concepts because its correlational methodology does not require an investigation of actual historical examples of democratization.[64] Recently, social historians, historical sociologists, and historical political scientists have turned to more detailed historical investigations of democratic struggles. What they have discovered, like C.B. Macpherson before them, is that what constitutes 'democracy' has nearly always been in dispute.[65] In other words, struggles over democracy were not and are not merely about elections and a governance project narrowly defined, but have involved debates about what government should do and what the substantive content of a democracy should be.

More recent historical work on democratization has also underlined the role of class factors in pushing democracy into being, though in a very different way than past efforts. In this view, democracy is less a victory of ideas, or a seemingly automatic or functional response to modernity and social complexity - in fact it is not fixed process at all - as much as a contingent result in particular historical circumstances driven by competition between traditional elites and newly organized political forces, specifically the working class.[66] Here democracy emerged from the contradictory pressures involved in entrenching and maintaining capitalism historically, pressures that altered the class

[64] When history is present in democratization work, as for instance in Huntington's essays on the three waves of democratization, it tends to serve more a setting where the already established variables of the model can play out, rather than comprising the empirical resource from which a close reading of the political and social developments could contribute to the development of a theoretical model.

[65] See G.R. Andrews and H. Chapman (eds.), *The Social Construction of Democracy, 1870-1990*, (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 5; C.B. Macpherson, *The Real World of Democracy*, (Toronto: CBC Enterprises, 1965), 1; and Philip Green, " 'Democracy' as a Contested Concept," in Philip Green (ed.), *Democracy*, (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1999), 2-18.

[66] See Rueschemeyer *et al*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*; Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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structures of western societies, created new openings for political organization, and focused attention on the state.[67] Left political parties were central to these struggles, both in pushing for a minimal democracy and contesting the limits of what would be defined as 'democracy.' Yet the democracy that resulted from all this was far from certain or automatic.

Turning now to the debates over 'the left,' it must be underlined how the term has always embraced multiple, overlapping, and occasionally conflicting ideas and movements. It has changed over time and differed both across and within countries in the same historical period. As a political description 'the left' has historically represented everything from insurrectionary anarchists, to democratic socialists, to revolutionary communists, to reformist social democrats and left-liberals. For our purposes it should be underlined that what the left has represented, or has been characterized to represent in popular and media discourse, has been contextually rooted in time and place.[68] Despite this diversity, some common themes have emerged. It would be fair to say that the left has consistently championed using the state to ameliorate the inequalities and injustices produced by capitalist social relations. For some this meant doing away with capitalism, while for others it meant effectively regulating it. Either way, such aspirations have been consistently perceived by the centre and right of the political spectrum as threatening to

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[67] However, there are key differences amongst these class approaches to democracy in terms of how they understand 'class' and 'capitalism' theoretically, with Rueschemeyer *et al* utilizing a critical Weberian approach while Eley comes from a social history approach informed by E.P. Thompson and other British Marxist historians. This study leans toward the latter approach and its understanding of class in capitalist society as fundamentally antagonistic. For Rueschemeyer *et al* on class and capitalism, see *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 5-7, 47-8, 51-63. Eley, like Thompson before him, is less specific about his theoretical approach to class, though his commitments would likely fall in line with those sketched out in Thompson's famously brief discussion in the preface to *The Making of the English Working Class*, (1963; London: Penguin, 1980), 8-10. For an attempt to add greater theoretical weight and rigor to Thompson's approach to class and class analysis, see Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), particularly chapters one to three.

[68] For a sense of both the continuity and change on the left in western Europe, see Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: The New Press, 1996).

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the interests they represent. The interaction of left, right and centre has produced a constant political struggle for control of the state, though the shape of that struggle has changed over time. Initially that struggle was characterized by a resistance to democracy from traditional political elites precisely for fear of what a left majority might do with state power. Yet democracy of a kind did come to most western countries despite these reservations. Here we need to draw out the class dynamics undergirding the rise of the left and what the left represented to explain how the democratic hurdle was overcome.

Historically, if we focus on western countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the struggle to entrench capitalism created pressures both for and against the introduction of democracy. As a class, capitalists faced political competition from older economic and social elites and economic competition within their own ranks. As they struggled throughout the nineteenth century to clear away the residues of pre-capitalist economic regulation and gain control of the state, capitalists sought both to marginalize their class enemies and competing fractions amongst their own class. But such concerns seldom moved them to embrace democracy. Instead, democracy was championed by a new group essentially created by capitalism: the working class. Struggles at the point of production had fuelled the rise of unions across western countries in the nineteenth century but frustration with the state's one-sided defence of capital in these disputes led to the formation of working class political parties to contest elections. These parties revolutionized political activity, creating a 'contagion from the left' in terms of policy and political organization. From the 1890s to WWI left parties increased their electoral and social support, running successfully in elections and organizing millions of working people to vote and demonstrate in the streets. Still, ruling groups continued to resist democracy and the agenda of left parties as a threat to the very logic of the capitalist system itself. Eventually however, amid economic crisis, war, and

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divisions amongst the ruling class, the threat of left parties forced the concession of minimally democratic government in most western countries. What emerged then was 'democracy' as an historically-specific class compromise, one that would prove subject to change, re-negotiation, or overthrow, depending on the balance of class forces and historical circumstances. Indeed, all of these outcomes eventually came to pass in different European countries during the inter-war period.[69]

This example of the tensions inherent in establishing and maintaining the early minimalist democracies can be generalized more broadly with the aid of Ralph Miliband's concept of 'capitalist democracy.' Miliband sought to clarify more specifically the kind of democracy that had emerged in modern capitalist societies, and the social and structural forces that gave it substance. Basically, he argued that the antagonistic social relations and economic inequalities generated by capitalism countered and radically diminished the equality of citizenship rights and public participation promised by democracy, and that such inequalities allowed the powerful to effect a 'containment' of popular pressures through various state and democratic institutions. As such, any democracy must be powerfully constrained in a capitalist setting as the rich have inordinate power to organize politically and help set the political agenda through their influence.[70] Yet Miliband was careful to underline that even this truncated capitalist

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[69] This account of the struggle for democracy draws from Therborn, "The Rise of Capital and the Rise of Democracy," Rueschemeyer et al, Capitalist Development and Democracy, and Eley, Forging Democracy. For a critical treatment of these approaches, see Thomas Ertman, "Review Article: Democracy and Dictatorship in Interwar Europe Revisited," World Politics, 50 (April 1998), 475-505.

[70] See Ralph Miliband, Capitalist Democracy in Britain, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982). Miliband was hardly the first to underline how capitalism affected democracy in modern societies. A long tradition on the left, stretching back to Marx, debated the contradictory possibilities and limits of a democracy embedded within capitalism. Indeed, a good many liberal scholars were also willing to admit that democracy under capitalism was a decidedly unequal contest, one that privileged business participation above all else. For a discussion of left criticism of democracy, see Hal Draper, "Marx on Democratic Forms of Government," in Ralph Miliband and John Saville (eds.), The Socialist Register 1974, (London: The Merlin Press, 1974), 101-124; Alan Hunt (ed.), Marxism and Democracy, (London: Lawrence and Wisehart, 1980); and Wood, Democracy Against Capitalism, specifically chapters 6 through 9. For liberal criticism, see Robert Dahl, Democracy and its Critics, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); R. Dahl, Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), specifically chapters 3, 5,

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form of democracy could pose a threat to the powerful, given the right conditions and a mobilized working class. The politics of capitalist democracy then involved a constant struggle to either strengthen or weaken the substantive element of popular participation, with critical implications for capitalists and their exercise of power over work and the state.[71] Not surprisingly, the powerful sought to forgo a regular engagement on this level, turning instead to institutional methods of control that would give the appearance of popular power but have the effect of seriously limiting public influence. Miliband's own key example here involved demonstrating how left parties tended to become effectively 'parliamentarized' or contained within the institutional rules of parliament instead of using their capacity to mobilize the public as a force along-side parliamentary action.[72]

Miliband's concept of capitalist democracy clarifies the relationship between democracy and the left, providing a plausible explanation as to why the left has consistently championed and succeeded in securing a minimal level of democracy historically. However the term also grounds our understanding of democracy materially, highlighting the conditions that make it a contradictory and limited accomplishment. Instead of assuming that democracy, and by extension voting system change, rise in response to cultural values or modernization or the historically unembedded rational calculations of political actors, Miliband's approach turns us back toward the historical struggles over democracy itself, struggles defined by the inequalities and instabilities generated by a specifically capitalist system of social and economic organization. By

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and 6; and Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1984).

[71] Other formulations of 'capitalist democracy' can be found in Przeworski's work, though his usage shifts considerably over time. See A. Przeworski , *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); A. Przeworski, "Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy," in G. O'Donnell, P. Schmitter and L. Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 62; and A. Przeworski *et al* (eds.), *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), where all references to capitalism disappear entirely.

[72] Miliband, *Capitalist Democracy in Britain*, 38. Miliband also noted how trade unions, media and intellectuals acted as forces for the containment of democratic aspirations.

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extension, then, struggles over institutions like voting systems may also reflect this tension in capitalist democracy.[73] As such, Miliband's concept of capitalist democracy will set the terms of the overarching theoretical framework to be employed in this study of voting system reform. Yet this is only a beginning. As it stands, Miliband's own concept is barely sketched out. Indeed, critics have complained that his notion of capitalist democracy fails to explicate just how the gap between democratic aspirations and reality is maintained in concrete terms.[74] Goran Therborn once summed up this general problem quite succinctly in his own work, wondering aloud how a tiny rich elite in capitalism managed to maintain control over the political system despite mass suffrage.[75] We will address this by expanding various aspects of Miliband's conceptualization of capitalist democracy to specify more concretely how the political struggle over the scope of democracy takes place, and by adding concerns related to the production and reproduction of economic, social and political cleavages, as well as by factoring in the influence of changing international political and economic developments.[76] In the end, we'll be able to apply this reinforced version of his concept to demonstrate how voting systems can be a site both of the containment process he describes and the challenges to it. But we'll also be able to extend its explanatory power by bridging the gap highlighted by his critics about how institutions specifically come to

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[73] Actually, Miliband hints that it was in a brief discussion of Britain's first-past-the-post voting system and its tendency to produce legislative majorities for both Labour and the Conservatives, despite the fact that neither party ever gained a majority of the popular vote in an election. Though both parties supported the system, Miliband argues that "the essential condition for its continued acceptability was that Labour, as the alternative party [of government], should remain an essentially 'moderate' party, whose activists should remain under the firm control of its 'moderate' leaders." When this appeared to be changing in the 1970s Miliband suggests that more critical attention began to focus on the voting system. See Miliband, *Capitalist Democracy in Britain*, 38.

[74] John Schwartzmantel, "Capitalist Democracy Revisited," in L. Panitch (ed.), *Why Not Capitalism: Socialist Register 1995*, (London: Merlin, 1995), 211-12, 216.

[75] Therborn, "The Rise of Capital and the Rise of Democracy," 3.

[76] That Miliband did not incorporate these factors into his discussion of capitalist democracy does not mean that he was unaware or unconcerned about them. In fact, he did address such themes in other works like *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969), *Marxism and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), and *Class Power and State Power* (London: Verso, 1983).

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play such a role. Here we'll apply an insight from Poulantzas to explore to what extent particular eras of voting system reform may best be understood as a 'condensation of class forces' in the electoral institutions of the state.[77]

Let's begin with the necessary expansion of various aspects of Miliband's existing concept, specifically political competition between the pro and anti-democracy forces. Miliband argues that while the new capitalist-spawned civil society provides some space for organizing and contesting capitalist hegemony, the balance is tipped toward capital due to the way the economy rewards them at the expense of workers. We need to specify how this process takes place more concretely. Here we can draw lessons from social historians about how historic and contemporary struggles linked to the introduction or ongoing regulation of capitalist social relations have contributed to the making and remaking of class identities, cultures, communities, and forms of resistance.[78] We can also turn to critical work on the nature of political cleavages to relate these struggles to changes in the forms of class organizations, specifically political parties.[79] Then we need

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[77] See Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, (1978; London: Verso, 2000), particularly Part Two, "Political Struggles: The State as a Condensation of a Relationship of Forces," 123-60.

[78] For examples of this social history approach, see E.J. Hobsbawm, "The Making of the Working Class," *Uncommon People: Resistance, Rebellion and Jazz*, (1984; London: Weidenfeld, 1998), 57-74; and James E. Cronin, "Labor Insurgency and Class Formation: Comparative Perspectives on the Crisis of 1917-1920 in Europe," *Social Science History*, 4:1 (February 1980), 125-52. Historically, social history emerged as a critique of traditional, elite-centred practices within both public and academic history, including a traditional political history that focused mostly on leaders and elections. Bringing social history to bear on political institutions, then, may seem curious. However, this division between social and political history has long been criticized and the application of social history approaches to the study political events and institutions appears now to be becoming more common. For a critique of apolitical social history see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese, "The Political Crisis of Social History: A Marxian Perspective," *Journal of Social History*, 10 (Winter 1976), 205-220; and for the influence of social approaches to political history see Mark H. Leff, "Revisioning U.S. Political History," *The American Historical Review*, 100:3 (1995), 852-3.

[79] As many scholars have noted, the term 'cleavage' is used in a number of ways. For some it indicates a social reality - the existence of social differences based on class, religion, ethnicity, etc. For others it refers to the political mobilization of those differences - the rise of a labour, religious or nationalist party. But here we will draw on Bartolini and Mair who offer a more nuanced, relational approach to the concept, suggesting that cleavages incorporate empirical (social structure), normative (constructed values/identity) and organizational dimensions (parties, social movements). For them, "cleavages cannot be reduced simply to the outgrowths of social stratification; rather, social distinctions become cleavages when they are organized as such." See Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair, *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability: The Stabilization of European Electorates 1885-1985*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 213-

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to highlight the necessary process of class interaction that is taking place here. In other words, the reactions of capital and its opponents are not fixed; they change as conditions change, as each learns from the other, as each struggles to re-make themselves, their social environment, and each other. This is a crucial element of pro and anti-democratic political struggle in capitalist democracies. This means we'll have to pay attention to the shifting role and capacities of political parties, mediating institutions like culture and media, and attempts to make, re-make and unmake political cleavages.

Then we need to add a few dimensions to Miliband's concept of capitalist democracy, specifically noting the influence of periodic struggles over the paradigmatic regulation of capitalism and international factors. As a fundamentally unstable economic system, prone to crisis, capitalism requires constant state intervention and support to survive, as is apparent from the historical record of the twentieth century. These crises are also a crucial component of capitalist democracy, destabilizing political coalitions and opening new spaces for class actors to mobilize their traditional political constituency or a new coalition in favour of a new regulatory framework.[80] International factors, both economic and political, must also be factored into any understanding of capitalist democracy. These would include the impact of war, changes in international trade and

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6. On the debate over parties and how they have changed over time see Peter Mair (ed.), *The West European Party System*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Ortganization and Power*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), xi-xii; Kay Lawson and Peter Merkl (eds.), *When Parties Fail: Emerging Alternative Organizations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[80] For just three studies highlighting the state's role in managing national and international capitalism, see Mitchell Bernard, "Post-Fordism, Transnational Production and the Changing Global Political Economy," in R. Stubbs and E. Geoffrey, and R.D. Underhill (eds.), *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994), 216-29; Simon Clarke, "Capitalist Crisis and the Rise of Monetarism," in R. Miliband, L, Panitch and J. Saville (eds.), *Socialist Register 1987*, (London: Merlin, 1987), 393-427; and Eric Helleiner, *States and the Reemergence of Global Finance*, (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1994).

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competition, the American sponsorship of the Cold War after WWII, and the recent increase in American hegemony with the decline of the former Soviet Union.[81]

Now, with some of these conceptual and contextual issues worked out, we can apply them to the project of explaining why voting systems change. As should be clear, the approach to be pursued here will cast these reforms within a critical understanding of the tensions inherent in specifically capitalist democracies, tensions affected by organized social and political cleavages, the nature of their organizational capacities, the shifting state regulation of economic policy, and the impact of international events. Particular attention will be paid to the role of left political parties, their perceived threat and organizational strength, or later in the twentieth century, their weakness and decline. Specifically, it will be explored to what extent voting system reform emerges consistently as a class strategy, as a 'condensation of class forces' within state electoral institutions, manifesting across the political spectrum, across countries, and across time.

The plan of the dissertation: method, structure and sources

As the study covers a long period of time – roughly from the mid-nineteenth century to the present – we must first periodize the different eras of reform, and then establish what countries will be included in the different periods, and the rationale for these decisions. We can accomplish this by setting out the structure of the dissertation itself and then turn to the sources that will be drawn upon to support the study. Empirically, national cases of voting system reform tend to clump together at different historical times. There are some upper house and sub-national reforms in the nineteenth century, a few conversions in the decade after the turn into the twentieth century, a few

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[81] For a brief overview of some of these factors, see Laurence Whitehead, "International Aspects of Democratization," in G. O'Donnell, P. Schmitter and L. Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, 3-46.

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more during wartime, and then a dramatic surge of change just after WWI, and again after WWII, followed by little until the renewal of reform interest in western countries in the 1990s. Thus there appear to be some obvious breaks between the different periods of change. The dissertation is divided into five historical periods that largely mirror the breakdown sketched out above. Let's take each in turn.

Chapter two examines nineteenth century voting system reforms, both in terms of the jurisdictions that pursued them and the reform forces that attempted to popularize them. Voting system reforms occurred at the national level in Denmark, for a portion of national voting in Britain, and at the sub-national level in Canada, Australia, the United States and Switzerland. There was also considerable agitation for voting system reform in Germany, Sweden and Belgium. These reform efforts are explored in the larger context of social change taking place, specifically the entrenchment of capitalist economies and the struggle for the franchise and responsible government. Key questions from the existing literature on this question are also tested, specifically the influence of reform organizations and calls for minority representation.

Chapters three, four and five explore voting system reform efforts alongside struggles for franchise extensions and/or responsible government in western countries from 1899 to 1925. Chapters three and four cover the period stretching from the turn of the century up to and including the war. These include both conservative, clearly non-democratic countries (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany) and quasi-democratic jurisdictions (France, Switzerland) in Europe in chapter three, and the Anglo-American countries (Britain, US, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia) in chapter four. Chapter five, beginning with the end of the war and extending through the revolutionary tumult of the early postwar years to the more quiescent mid-

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1920s, includes most of these same countries (except the Netherlands), and adds Italy, Ireland, and a brief assessment of developments in eastern Europe.

Chapters six and seven take up reform politics in the post-1945 era. Chapter six focuses on the wave of voting system reforms after WWII, stretching from the radical politics of the immediate postwar period through to the entrenchment of the Cold War in the 1950s. Countries examined include France, Germany, Italy, Australia, Canada, and the United States. Chapter seven looks at the most recent reforms in New Zealand, Japan, Italy, and the UK, linking them to earlier debates in 1960s in Ireland and Netherlands, and in Canada and France in the 1970s and 1980s, against a backdrop of economic change, declining democratic legitimacy, and party de-alignment. Chapter eight concludes by drawing together the insights gathered from the explorations of the different periods.

The rule for inclusion of a country in any of the different period depends on whether any serious efforts at voting system reform existed in that country in that period. This is why the universe of countries under scrutiny is large and changes somewhat from chapter to chapter. For instance, voting system reform is a key reform issue in Sweden in the late nineteenth century and around WWI but not after WWII or in the more recent period. Thus it fails to appear in chapters six and seven, though the reasons for voting system stability in non-reforming countries is addressed more generally. However, even amongst our universe of countries where the voting system does become an issue, reform efforts do not always succeed. Thus we can compare among different examples of successful reform and between examples of success and failure. Another inclusion rule limits the study to western industrialized countries. Though non-western countries also witnessed efforts at voting system reform throughout this period, their general political

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and economic development has been markedly different than that in western countries.[82]

While useful comparisons may be made at some point between western and non-western

patterns of reform, present efforts are hobbled by a failure to appreciate the gap between

the two, particularly with regard to the entrenchment of capitalism and the nature and

scope of international influence in struggles for democracy.[83] As this study seeks to

uncover why voting systems change in different countries, limiting our study to countries

with a broadly similar history of economic and political development will allow us to

isolate the key factors contributing to change.[84]

The choice to pursue historical rather than quantitative evidence in developing an

explanation of voting system change has been defended above. In summary, the decision

is premised on the belief that quantitative methods are inadequate in constructing

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[82] For some insight into non-western voting systems and patterns of reform, see Mark P. Jones, "A Guide to the Electoral Systems of the Americas," *Electoral Studies*, 14:1 (1995), 5-21; Andrew Reynolds, *Electoral Systems and Democratization in Southern Africa*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Bernard Grofman *et al* (eds.), *Elections in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan under the Single Non-Transferable Vote*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999). For a discussion of how non-western patterns of 'modernization' differed from western experience, see Paul Cammack, "Democratization and citizenship in Latin America," in G. Parry and M. Moran (eds.), *Democracy and Democratization*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 174-95.

[83] For examples of this sort of indiscriminate comparison between western and non-western countries, see Shugart, "'Extreme' Electoral Systems and the Appeal of the Mixed-Member Alternative," 25-51; and Colomer, "The Strategy and History of Electoral System Choice," in Colomer (ed.), *Handbook of Electoral System Choice*, specifically section three, "The Electoral System Evolution," 53-68. For a rare example of a study of electoral reform that does appreciate the specificity of non-western development, see Sanil Bastian, "The Political Economy of Electoral Reform: Proportional Representation in Sri Lanka," in S. Bastian and R. Luckham (eds.), *Can Democracy be Designed?* (London: Zed Books, 2003), 196-219.

[84] It should be underlined that European and Anglo-American countries can be considered 'similar' only in the broadest terms, as remarkable differences in economic and political development exist among them. The most obvious examples include the stark differences in political development between continental Europe and the Anglo-American countries, and the economic differences between northern and southern Europe. Yet these countries are more similar to each other in economic and political terms than they are to non-western countries. As such, J.S. Mill's 'most similar' approach to comparison offers key advantages in sorting through the many different historical contexts of voting system reform. As Roberts notes, "[t]he advantage of using a 'most similar' approach is that, where the problem is one of identifying and accounting for specific differences, selection of units for analysis which possess many similarities in terms of relevant variables makes easier the identification of variables which *do* differ, and which may thus be considered as the first candidates for investigation as causal or explanatory variables." See G.K. Roberts, "The Explanation of Politics: Comparison, Strategy and Theory," in P. Lewis et al, *The Practice of Comparative Politics, Second Edition*, (London: Longman, 1978), 293.

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complex causal accounts of essentially non-repeatable historical events.[85] Past efforts to quantify processes of voting system change demonstrate these problems all too well, specifically the tendency to homogenize important differences in actor motivation, historical contexts, and the influence of historical sequences of events.[86] A comparative historical approach can better accommodate the specificity of different cases, including how different factors interact and the importance of the sequence of historical events, and develop a basis for comparison that does not sacrifice explanatory nuance. This also gets around the small 'N' problem identified with case study approaches.[87] An historical approach is also necessary given the conceptual commitments outlined above. In utilizing Ralph Miliband's concept of capitalist democracy we explicitly eschew the ahistorical influence of modern economics and democratization studies that have defined work on voting system reform. Instead, as the economy and democracy are seen as historical accomplishments as well, they must be explained rather than assumed and then incorporated into our explanation of voting system change.

The dissertation will draw primarily on secondary sources in developing its explanation. Though challenging for a host of methodological reasons, comparative work of the scope set forth here would be impossible any other way.[88] As Theda Skocpol has noted, "a dogmatic insistence on redoing primary research for every investigation ...

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[85] For a brief review of some of these methodological concerns, see Katznelson, "Reflections on History, Method, and Political Science," 11-4; Robert W. Cox, "On Thinking about Future World Order," *World Politics*, 28:2 (January 1976), 178; Steve Smith, "Positivism and Beyond," in S. Smith, K. Booth and M. Zaleuski (eds.), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 18-9; and Rueschemeyer *et al*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 4-35.

[86] See Boix, "Setting the Rules of the Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies," 609-624; and Colomer, "The Strategy and History of Electoral System Choice," in Colomer (ed.), *Handbook of Electoral System Choice*, specifically section three, "The Electoral System Evolution," 53-68.

[87] Typically comparative politics split between a quantitative multi-country approaches and more qualitative case studies. Here quantitative researchers would criticize the case study approach for the small 'N' - or number of cases - in their work, arguing that such a small number of examples was too narrow to generalize from. By taking up a large number of cases, comparative historical work cannot be subject to this aspect of their criticisms.

[88] For a concise review of the methodological challenges of historical-comparative research, particularly concerns about the use of secondary sources, see Newman, *Social Research Methods*, 395-412.

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would rule out most comparative-historical research."[89]   With careful attention to changing historiographical conventions, and critical reading of the theory and evidence provided, secondary sources can be utilized effectively for historical comparative re-interpretations, especially when they are supplemented by some primary sources and research.[90]   As Katznelson suggests, we must "interrogate less systematic evidence methodically."[91]   In the end, the trade-offs between historically rich case studies and broad comparative work can balance out in a kind of dialectical influence on another. This study hopes to raise some new ways of interpreting voting system change through a broad comparison across countries and across time, obviously something single case studies cannot do.   Any conclusions drawn here will have to be tested subsequently in more fine-grained historical enquiry, thus letting the process of interaction begin again.

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[89] Theda Skocpol (ed.), *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 382.
[90] Skocpol, *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, 382-3; Katznelson, "Reflections on History, Method, and Political Science," 13.
[91] Katznelson, "Reflections on History, Method, and Political Science," 12.

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Chapter Two: Nineteenth Century Voting System Reform

Introduction

Historical studies of voting system reform invariably begin in the nineteenth century. Most start by reviewing the contributions of political theorists and voting system designers like Condorcet, Hare, Mill, and others, then shift attention to the emergence of organizations dedicated to electoral reform in the particular country or region under study, and finally recount important debates and campaigns.[1] Denmark's short-lived experiment with a partially proportional voting system in 1856, the adoption of PR in a few Swiss cantons in the 1890s, and Belgium's introduction of PR for national elections are all typically highlighted as the key examples of this early 'minority representation' phase of voting system reform.[2] But these historical accounts are misleading because pro-reform political theorists, voting system designers, and reform organizations had little influence with governments or politicians in the nineteenth century, and nowhere did minority interests alone secure a new voting system.[3] In fact, excepting Belgium's adoption of PR in literally the last days of 1899, the century can hardly be characterized as a voting system reform era at all, especially when compared to the more dynamic reform periods associated with WWI, post-WWII, and the 1990s. But

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[1] See Hoag and Hallett, *Proportional Representation*; D. Ziegler, "Proportional Representation in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany, 1871-1920," (Unpublished Ph.D, University of Nebraska, 1956); R. Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," (Unpublished Ph.D., University of Nebraska, 1964); Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe*; J. Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992; K. Barber, *A Right to Representation,* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), and Colomer, "The Strategy and History of Electoral System Choice," 3-80.

[2] S. Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, 157.

[3] In fact, most of the sources themselves document just how marginal reformers were in this period, noting that Considerant's early proposals were considered 'eccentric,' or recounting J.S. Mill's rough treatment at the hands of his fellow MPs when he tried to broach the subject in 1867. See E. Naville, "PR in Switzerland," *PR Review*, 1:2 (December 1893), 55; Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe*, 138; E.J. Feuchtwanger, "Electoral systems: an Anglo-German comparison, 1867-1933," *Historical Research*, LXV:157 (June 1992), 195-6.

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possibly of more importance, conventional historical work also is misleading because its focus on minority representation obscures the real dynamic fueling voting system reform in the nineteenth century and in later periods. Far from being merely a method of minority elite inclusion or, later, a reaction to electoral competition from new parties, voting system reform was part of a larger struggle for democratically elected, accountable government.

The problems start with conventional understandings of the origins of democratic government or, as it is often called, the 'process of democratization.' Put simply, most work assumes too much. Either democracy is assumed to have been accomplished sometime in the nineteenth century, to which voting system reform is merely the last significant detail, or various reforms passed at different times - male suffrage, the secret ballot, etc. - are stitched together to form an ineluctable process of democratization, with voting system reform merely comprising the last stage.[4] Either way, the specific significance of changing the voting system is lost, both in terms of what makes voting system reform distinct from other institutional reforms, and in terms of what makes it consistent with previous struggles over institutions.

For all these reasons we must return to the nineteenth century to reorient our exploration of voting system reform. First, we need to recognize that the nineteenth century primarily involved the accomplishment of representative, not democratic, government.[5] Utilizing even the most minimal standards of democracy - a significant degree of mass suffrage, government accountable to an elected legislature, and free and

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[4] See Collier, *Paths Towards Democracy*, 24-5; Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, 87; von Beyme, *Parliamentary Democracy*, 27. Collier's work represents the most egregious example of this approach. She begins by defining 'democracy' as a set of institutions - rule of law, franchise, elections, etc. - and 'democratization' as the process by which these are sequentially introduced. But Collier is reading back from later events, assuming that because various countries do eventually become at least minimally democratic that these reforms are all steps toward that result - a dubious and historically false assumption.

[5] As Therborn put it "none of the great bourgeois revolutions actually established bourgeois democracy." See Therborn, "The Rule of Capital and the Rise of Democracy," 17.

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fair elections - only the United States, France and Switzerland might be considered democratic by the late nineteenth century, and then only with significant qualifications.[6] Second, we must acknowledge that the achievement of even minimally democratic government was an historical accomplishment, not the result of some inexorable democratization process. It is only with hindsight that early suffrage or parliamentary reforms can be characterized unproblematically as the first steps toward democracy. For instance, Britain's First Great Reform Act of 1832 only gained the name in light of later events; at the time its authors understood it as the end, not the beginning, of reform.[7]

The nineteenth century, then, was not the era of democratic consolidation, but rather the one where the idea of democracy as a potential system of government emerged for the first time as a serious proposal, fueling great debate, hope, fear and struggle. Traditional elites, typically royalty, the aristocracy and landowners, feared democracy and opposed it at every turn. But so did the newly emerging elites of merchants and industrialists, even while they sought greater power and influence for themselves.[8] Only

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[6] There is much debate over just what constitutes the necessary conditions of democratic rule. Therborn defines bourgeois democracy as, at a minimum, requiring "1. a representative government elected by 2. an electorate consisting of the entire adult population, 3. whose votes carry equal weight, and 4. who are allowed to vote for any opinion without intimidation by the state apparatus ." By Therborn's rather restrictive definition, few countries could claim to be democratic well into the twentieth century (for instance, because of restrictions against black voters he puts the United States' attainment of democracy at 1960). See Therborn, "The Rule of Capital and the Rise of Democracy," 4, 11, 16-7. While his conditions are certainly laudable in terms of what democratic process should attain at a minimum, they define away an important shift from the period of *regime censitaire* representative government to mass participation 'accountable' government. Thus I would put the minimum conditions of arguably democratic government as requiring a significant degree of mass participation (i.e. at least male suffrage) and a government accountable to the electorate through regular elections. Of course, even when various countries appear to satisfy these two conditions, as France and Switzerland appear to by 1900, other factors must be included if they appear to negate or seriously impede either one. These qualifications involve the erratic administration of elections, including corruption, ballot stuffing, uneven enforcement of rules and much else.

[7] M. Levin, *The Spectre of Democracy: The Rise of Modern Democracy as Seen by its Critics,* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 28. Bernard Manin makes a similar point about American history, noting that U.S. founding father James Madison understood his proposal for 'representative government' to be not merely a different kind of democracy, but a wholly different and altogether better alternative because it would allow society's natural elite - the wealthy - superior influence. See B. Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2-4.

[8] von Beyme, *Parliamentary Democracy* , 16-7. However von Beyme makes the same mistakes as those he criticizes when he turns to electoral reforms, characterizing them as being motivated by aims to increase the

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the lower classes - displaced artisans, tradesmen, and an emergent, largely unskilled working class - consistently demanded and defended proposals for democratic government.[9] It was out of this crucible of conflict that early institutional reforms emerged. However, contrary to democratization proponents, these reforms were specifically designed to strengthen the governing system against pressures for more democracy. Thus manipulations of the franchise, the introduction of voter registration laws, plural voting, etc. were explicitly intended to broaden access to the government to politically acceptable groups, while keeping the increasing majority of the citizenry, the urban working class, far distant from decision-making.[10]

In this light, voting system reform can also be seen as part of a long tradition of institutional change aimed at bolstering anti-democratic forces. For instance, in both the nineteenth and twentieth century proportional voting systems received considerable attention for how well they might diminish the strength of the working class vote. Yet at the same time, most of the emerging left parties also endorsed PR, no doubt contributing to some of the academic confusion about what role the reform really played. Some minor voting system reforms were introduced in the nineteenth century in Denmark, Britain, Illinois and Ontario but they were typically short-lived.[11] Public debate and minority advocacy were no more successful in getting serious voting system reform than they were gaining democratic government. Discussion only tended to give way to action where the

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"participation of new political forces in government." Here he appears to be echoing conventional political science generalizations rather than investigating them.

[9] Rueschemeyer et al, Capitalist Development and Democracy, 6; Eley, Forging Democracy, 10.

[10] R.J. Goldstein, Political Repression in 19th Century Europe, (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 333-4. This was also true in the United States where the expansion of the franchise to white males largely preceded the emergence of a significant working class. Alexander Keyssar agues that extensive manipulations of the franchise and other electoral laws occurred from the mid-eighteenth century on, spurred by increasing industrialization, the proletarianization of poor farmers, and the rapid, large-scale immigration of European workers into American cities. See A. Keyssar, The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States, (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 170.

[11] The exception being Illinois, which used the cumulative vote for state legislative elections from 1870 to 1980. Denmark also used the single transferable vote beyond the 1850s but for a substantially reduced electorate.

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pressures for democracy could no longer be resisted. And the key to achieving democratic government, particularly in Europe, was the rise of ideologically disciplined, organizationally sophisticated political parties of the left, parties that were clearly politically mobilizing and directing the masses.

This chapter will recast the history of voting system reform in the nineteenth century, demonstrating how the basic tension fueling reform in the twentieth century - the organizational and ideological threat of mass left parties - can be traced back to the century prior. This will be accomplished by sketching out the emergence of voting system reform as an issue of elite and public debate, reviewing the conditions contributing to the adoption of some minor voting system reforms in a few locales, and tracing the formation of various reform advocacy groups. But it will also involve an examination of the dramatic economic and political changes reshaping western societies throughout the late nineteenth century. Far from confirming the minority representation thesis, this approach will demonstrate that voting system reform, fueled initially largely by party self-interest and anti-democratic sentiment, came ultimately to be influenced by the rise of disciplined, organized left parties, particularly in the 1890s.

Voting system reform in the nineteenth century

In the nineteenth century European countries used either plurality or majority voting rules.[12] Countries with any degree of Catholic influence used majority systems (a

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[12] Plurality voting, also known as 'first-past-the-post' or 'winner-take-all' or 'x'-voting, requires only that a candidates gain more votes than any other single candidate. With two candidates running, the winner will most likely gain a majority of the votes. However, with more than two candidates running, a winner may succeed with less than a majority of the vote, and in evenly competitive cases even much less than 50%. Majority voting systems seek to correct for this anomaly in plurality voting by assuring that a winning candidate does gain a majority of the votes cast. This is most typically accomplished by conducting a second round of voting at a later date in those constituencies where no candidate gained a majority of the votes cast. In the nineteenth century a number locales even had provision for a third round of voting (Switzerland, France). Plurality and majority voting can be conducted in either single or multi-member ridings.

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legacy traced by many to the long tradition of majority voting for elections in the church hierarchy) while Protestant countries all used plurality rules, typically a holdover from estate schemes of representation.[13] The modern era of debate begins with French discussions of representation and voting in the late eighteenth century, culminating in a number of proposals for proportional voting systems during the French Revolution.[14]

The emergence of debate over voting systems reflected the increasing importance of elections. Jenifer Hart suggests that reconsideration of Britain's voting system did not emerge until the late eighteenth century because elections before then were seldom competitive. Traditionally, representation had been worked out on an informal basis amongst leading members of the community, a group who often comprised the total electorate.[15] The experience of greatly expanded suffrage during the French Revolution demonstrated the inadequacy of these traditional methods of social and political control under such circumstances. More generally, voting system reforms emerged as one response to the increasing consolidation of national states as the sole repositories of political power and legitimacy.

Interest in voting systems paled in comparison to the more general campaign for parliamentary reform, a sometimes century long struggle to expand the suffrage, specifically to include men of property, and to subordinate the executive, or the effective control of the government, to parliament. Historically, franchise reforms, involving a shift from estate representation to property qualifications, came well before parliamentary

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[13] Though why estate voting tended toward plurality is less clear. See Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, 156; P. Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections Since 1789, Second Edition*, (Hamden, Archon Books, 1965), 21. There is some evidence that voting was the subject of much debate in the late Roman period and again in the Middle Ages amongst religious scholars, though it is not clear if these discussions had much influence on later developments. In Britain, plurality was formally adopted in 1430 to select two knights from every shire to attend parliament. See Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945*, 5; Barber, *A Right to Representation*, 161.

[14] Hoag and Hallett, *Proportional Representation*, 162-3; Barber, *A Right to Representation*, 3. For a summary of some of these pre-modern developments, see Colomer, "The Strategy and History of Electoral System Choice," 13-42.

[15] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945*, 5.

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control of the executive.[16] By the mid-nineteenth century, nearly all of Europe had opened up representation to the wealthy or those with sufficient property. Yet voting rights did not lead to dramatic changes in the composition of European parliaments (most remained decidedly aristocratic) or assure bourgeois influence. In fact, frustration with monarchial and/or aristocratic control of government in the early to mid-nineteenth century even contributed to bourgeois support for revolutionary outbursts in 1820, 1831 and 1848. As it turned out, subordinating control of the government to parliament would prove a formidable battle. The 'parliamentarization' of political power was often a piecemeal affair, involving a myriad of legal, electoral and political party strategies that could stretch over decades.[17] Yet all this occurred without any serious challenges arising to traditional voting systems. There were repeated calls for proportional voting from French advocates of voting reform - in the 1790s, the 1830s, and just before the revolution of 1848 - to address all manner of political instability, and some brief discussion of semi-proportional systems in Britain in the 1830s.[18] But the nature of the competition in this early period - still very much competing elites amongst small electorates in most places - was such that discussion of voting system reform remained marginal to the key political debates and movements.

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[16] It is important to recall that neither parliaments nor representation were novelties of the nineteenth century. As A.R. Myers notes, both stretched back to the early days of feudalism. What was novel was the shift from representation based on social position - noble, landlord, clergy, sometimes peasant - to representation based solely on class, and from the overlapping and multiple sovereignties of the feudal system (in most cases with diminishing effect in the face of royal absolutism anyway) to the idea of parliamentary supremacy. See A.R. Myers, *Parliaments and Estates in Europe to 1789*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 24-8.

[17] von Beyme, *Parliamentary Democracy*, 25-6.

[18] Barber, *A Right to Representation*, 3-4; Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945*, 9, 12.

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Voting system experimentation: Denmark, Britain, America and Canada

Where minor voting system reforms did emerge was in countries where a significant degree of parliamentarization or 'responsible government' had already been achieved: Denmark in the 1850s, Britain in the 1860s, the United States in the 1870s, and Canada in the 1880s. Ironically, most voting system literature focuses on continental Europe where parliamentarization had progressed the least. This is perhaps not surprising given that key early academic treatments of the question were really more focused on how nineteenth century nation-building created endemic problems of national integration, particularly how to effectively 'integrate' various political, ethnic, religious and language minorities into centralized state systems. For them, the rise of proportional voting was a logical response from traditional and emerging national elites to minority religion and language concerns in Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland. They quickly dubbed the nineteenth century the 'minority representation phase' of voting system reform, and, in seeming agreement with its historic proponents, characterized the adoption of proportional voting as a victory for 'tolerance' and 'inclusion.'[19] But it is only by ignoring the historical sequence of events related to these reforms that the changes can be understood as involving minority representation or representing progressive goals.

For example, Europe's first experience with proportional voting in 1856, often touted as a reform designed to protect Denmark's German minority, was in fact part of a wave of Danish nationalism keen to expand state power and actually weaken the language rights of the German majorities in the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein.[20] By treaty,

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[19] Rokkan, *Citizens, Elections, Parties*, 157.
[20] For the minority protection argument see Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe*, 77; and Barber, *A Right to Representation*, 7-8.

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these two regions were nominally under the administrative control of Denmark. But it must be remembered that Europe in the mid-century was still a patchwork of regional government, characterized by the legacy of pre-Westphalian notions of multiple and overlapping sovereignty, derived from tradition, royal inter-marriage, military conquest and trade. A host of complicated, confusing and sometimes contradictory treaties inter-linked much of Europe into relations of mutual obligation and necessary consultation. Thus it could be - and was - argued that the Danish king only 'ruled' these largely German-speaking duchies in the weakest sense. Historically, they were traditionally autonomous and self-governing, with strong links to the German confederation, and protected by a series of treaties that expressly forbade their incorporation into a larger Denmark.[21] It was only by forcing these largely German-speaking duchies into a more formal Danish federation that they became a minority at all. Even then, the introduction of PR could hardly be explained as a reform designed to 'protect' them as a minority because as a regionally concentrated group, the geographic bias inherent in plurality voting would not have discriminated against them.[22] The real reason for PR was to further dilute German representation in a larger Denmark by better representing Danish-speaking minorities in the duchies, particularly Schleswig, thus aiding a project of more formally incorporating the territories into an indivisible Danish state. The fact that the duchies were not consulted about the reforms and quickly repudiated them after their

[21] S. Oakley, *A Short History of Denmark*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 180; K. Sandiford, *Great Britain and the Schleswig-Holstein Question 1848-64*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 20-1, 37; W.G. Jones, *Denmark: A Modern History*, (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 34, 39-40.

[22] Plurality voting systems affect minority interests in different ways, depending on their geographic concentration. Where minorities are evenly spread across a country, like the mid-to-late twentieth century British Liberal party or Canadian New Democratic Party, they tend to be dramatically under-represented because they lack enough support in any specific geographical area or ridings to win a seat. However, where a minority is geographically concentrated, like Britain's Scottish National party of the 1970s and 1980s, or Canada's Social Credit from the 1930s through 1970s, they can be effectively represented under plurality, and in some case even handsomely over-represented. For a discussion of this effect, see Richard Johnston and Janet Ballantyne, "Geography and the Electoral System," in J. Paul Johnston and Harvey Pais (eds.), *Representation and Electoral Systems: Canadian Perspectives*, (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 286-93.

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introduction renders 'minority protection' claims unconvincing.[23] In the end, Holstein refused to participate in the new federal Denmark while Schleswig simply rejected PR and stuck with plurality voting. After years of internal and international dispute, Denmark eventually lost control of both duchies to Germany after a series of devastating military losses in 1866.[24]

The complex historical dynamics fueling voting system reform in mid-nineteenth century Denmark should militate against any overly sanguine or simplistic reading of the cases. Just how little the adoption of new voting systems in this period represented a victory for 'tolerance' or the principle that minorities deserve representation can be seen from the fact that the actual 'minorities' driving consideration of the issue were often very powerful and little interested in principle. For instance, the cumulative vote was given serious consideration by southern whites during the post-Civil War reconstruction era in the United States, particularly where blacks formed a majority.[25] The combination of the Congressional enfranchisement of freed black slaves with the disenfranchisement of former confederate leaders in 1867 created black majorities in five southern states. In the same year a Pennsylvania Senator, Democrat Charles Buckalew, sponsored a bill to introduce the cumulative vote for elections to Congress from the southern states, a reform

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[23] Oakley, *A Short History of Denmark*, 181; L.D. Steefel, *The Schleswig-Holstein Question*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), 16-7, 29, 33.

[24] Oakley, *A Short History of Denmark*, 188-91. Denmark continued to use its PR system, though after the military loss Conservatives regained political control and dramatically reduced the scope of the franchise. For a description of Denmark's unique PR system at this time, see Hoag and Hallett, *Proportional Representation*, 171-75, 269-70.

[25] The cumulative vote is so called because it allows voters in a multi-member riding to 'cumulate' their votes on one or just a few candidates as opposed to giving a single vote to different candidates. Under normal plurality rules in a multi-member riding, voters would have as many votes as there are seats to be filled – with five seats available in many of the typical American urban ridings in this period, voters would have five votes and parties would typically run five candidates. But this arrangement tended to work against the minority party as every candidate of the major party would most often gain more votes than every candidate of the smaller party. With as little as 51% of the vote, the majority party could take 100% of the seats, while the minority party would gain no representation for 49% of the popular vote. With the cumulative vote, minority interests could limit the number of candidates they offered for election and then 'cumulate' their support on them, thus overcoming their numerical disadvantage.

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he claimed would allow black representation from the region.[26] Of course, it would also assure white representation where they were in the minority. Buckalew's proposal failed, as did a later bill in 1869 to introduce cumulative voting across the country as a whole. However, at the state level, interest in voting system reform remained keen into the 1870s. The white minority in South Carolina called for the adoption of the cumulative vote in 1874 to "enable white property owners to gain ... adequate representation in the making and execution of laws." Though the governor expressed interest, the black Republican majority of South Carolina's lower house did not.[27] The issue only died out with the end of reconstruction in 1877 and the reassertion of white political, economic and social power in all southern states, involving the effective disenfranchisement of black voters and the violent suppression of black political organizing. Here the white minority found a different solution to their 'problem'; principle did not figure in.[28]

Political parties are another example of the kind of powerful 'minorities' that sometimes expressed interest in voting system reform in the nineteenth century, particularly in two party systems. Where party support was highly regionalized, even the

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[26] Barber, *A Right to Representation*, 21. Buckalew's own views may indeed have been shaped by more idealistic goals as there were northern Democrats that supported the more modest goals of Reconstruction, but such an assessment would require more in-depth research. Of course, the question of 'minority' representation did not arise solely from the exigencies of the Civil War. In fact, the manipulation of electoral rules, particularly districting, had generated debate since the emergence of a new party system in the 1820s and had led to federal legislation to further 'minority' interests (i.e. a powerful national party suffering minority status in certain regions) in the 1840s. See Erik J. Engstrom, "The United States: the Past – Moving from Diversity to Uniform Single Member Districts," in Colomer (ed.), *Handbook of Electoral System Choice*, 155-63.

[27] Barber, *A Right to Representation*, 22.

[28] For insight into the tense political machinations of the period and the manner in which white hegemony was re-established, see Jack B. Scroggs, "Carpetbagger Constitutional Reform in the Southern Atlantic States, 1867-8," *The Journal of Southern History*, 27:4 (November 1961), 475-93; Herbert Shapiro, "The Ku Klux Klan During Reconstruction: The South Carolina Episode," *The Journal of Negro History*, 49:1 (January 1964), 34-55; Edward F. Sweat, "The Union Leagues and the South Carolina Election of 1870," *The Journal of Negro History*, 61:2 (April 1976), 200-14; and William C. Hine, "Black Politicians in Reconstruction Charleston, South Carolina: A Collective Study," *The Journal of Southern History*, 49:4 (November 1983), 555-84. For debate on these developments, see Armstead M. Robinson, "Explaining the Failure of Democratic Reform in South Carolina," *Reviews in American History*, 8:4 (December 1980), 521-530; and Michael Les Benedict, "The Politics of Prosperity in the Reconstruction South," *Reviews in American History*, 12:4 (December 1984), 507-14.

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majority party might initiate reform to gain representation where it was weak, both to prevent regional polarization, but also to aid party-building efforts in marginal constituencies. Britain's Conservatives introduced the semi-proportional limited vote for use in a number of urban multi-member constituencies in 1867 as part of a series of reform trade-offs that marginally increased the electorate and raised the level of urban representation.[29] The rurally-based Conservatives had long resisted both reforms, fearing they would primarily benefit the more urban Liberals. The limited vote appeared to offer a way forward, allowing Conservatives to take credit for the reforms, while laying the basis for Conservative party-building in the new constituencies, despite their minority position in urban ridings.[30] However, when the Liberals proved adept at organizing their voters to frustrate Conservative efforts in some of these constituencies, party support for the reform evaporated and it was repealed in 1884.[31]

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[29] The limited vote is so called because electors are limited in the number of votes they can cast in a multi-member constituency. As with the cumulative vote example above, normal plurality rules in multi-member ridings tended to create lopsided results, giving all representation to the dominant view and little or nothing to the minority view. But by limiting the number of votes that an elector could cast, say to four in a five member riding, the majority party could not be certain their candidates would defeat all others. Thus the limited vote, in a crude way, could offer some hope for minority representation.

[30] Conservative members of the House of Lords were actually responsible for introducing this element of minority representation into the bill, despite the fact that Disraeli had argued against and defeated a similar amendment in the House. See Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, 341-3. Both Seymour and Ostrogorski credit the introduction of the limited vote with spurring the development of more extensive party organization. Which party benefited more from the reform is more ambiguous. By Hanham's reckoning, the system gave the Liberals an extra three seats in 1868, an extra eight in 1874, and extra four in 1880. However, the reform did grant the Tories minority representation in all urban areas but Birmingham and Glasgow and was widely understood as a form of 'Conservative insurance.' See H.J. Hanham, *Elections and Party Management*, (1959; Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978), 398. Meanwhile Feuchtwanger suggests that the reform laid the basis for a later drift of Liberal support to the Tories in those very constituencies. See E.J. Feuchtwanger, *Democracy and Empire: Britain 1865 - 1914*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1985), 43-4. On the whole, however, the effects of the reform were small as it applied to less than one percent of the seats in Parliament. See J. Colomer, "Western Europe: General Overview," in Colomer (ed.), *Handbook of Electoral System Choice*, 180.

[31] Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales*, 301. Seymour also notes that parliamentarians of all stripes "disliked and feared" the "practical despotism of new political associations" that were attributed to the system. However, Jones suggests that various schemes for minority representation, including either an extension or limitation of the use of the limited vote was considered and proposed by Conservative leaders during the 1884-5 reform negotiations, displaced only by the move toward single member ridings. See A. Jones, *The Politics of Reform 1884*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 184, 210.

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A similar dynamic fueled reform at the sub-national level in United States and Canada in the late nineteenth century. Lingering bitterness stemming from the US Civil War left the state of Illinois appearing regionally divided between a confederate-supporting Democratic south and a union-supporting Republican north, at least according to election results. The reality was that both parties enjoyed considerable support in both regions, though the plurality system turned their regional majorities into a polarized political situation, with threats against supporters of each parties wherever they were in a minority. Voters decided in favour of the cumulative vote as a solution through a state plebiscite in 1870, though there is some evidence that the parties were none too happy about it. However, when it became clear that cumulative voting offered little help to third parties, Republicans and Democrats warmed to the system, with minority factions in both parties working to keep it in place for over a century.[32] In Ontario, the question of third parties would also prove important in the lifespan of voting system reforms. Much as in Britain, the majority party in Ontario was effectively shut out of the major urban centre by the opposition. In this case, the governing Liberals introduced the limited vote for elections to the provincial legislature from the multi-member constituency of Toronto in 1885, hoping to break the stranglehold on the city's seats by the Conservatives. Initially, the reform delivered the desired results; a Liberal was elected from Toronto in both the 1886 and 1890 elections. However, when independent candidates, particularly of a labour persuasion, appeared set to benefit from the new rules the system was hastily repealed in 1893.[33]

Ontario's experience highlighted the real tension behind institutional reform in the nineteenth century - just how to fashion flexible representation while protecting society's

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[32] Barber, *A Right to Representation*, 24-5.
[33] H.C.J. Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada, 1874-1974," (University of Western Ontario: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1976), 106-9.

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most powerful minority, the wealthy.[34] This was arguably the key 'minority' concern of

the period, well ahead of language and religion. Concern was driven by the widespread

demographic changes throughout the century that were remaking the physical and social

space of Europe. Capitalist restructuring of western economies led to a depopulation of

rural areas as people moved into urban areas in search of work, a trend that spiked

considerably in the last three decades of the century. This new urban society of wage-

workers constituted a unique historical development, one that challenged traditional

methods of social control. Across Europe, both conservative and liberal elites feared the

new urban proletariat, seeing them as violent, uncivilized, and essentially a 'mob.'[35] Not

surprisingly, few amongst the elites supported the extension of political rights to the

urban masses. Conservative British PM Lord Robert Cecil spoke for many when he

complained that universal suffrage would only assure that "the rich would pay all the

taxes and the poor make all the laws."[36] On the other side of parliament Whig MP

Thomas B. Macaulay conveyed a similar sentiment when he declared suffrage extension

"utterly incompatible with the existence of civilization." Later, as Lord Macauley, he

added that mass suffrage would simply allow the poor "to plunder every man in the

kingdom who has a good coat on his back and good roof over his head."[37] On these

matters, British elites were hardly distinguishable from their counterparts in Europe.[38]

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[34] This is why reforms like suffrage extensions or the secret ballot cannot be seen as steps in some 'democratization' process. Their historical rationales were nearly always formulated in terms of expediency and explicitly against democratic outcomes. The fact that many were not passed as permanent reforms would seem to counter evolutionary or cumulative explanations. For instance, Corrigan and Sayers suggest that the secret ballot was passed in Britain in 1872 as a temporary expedient to satisfy an important member of cabinet for a limited period of just eight years. After that, it required an annual renewal every year until 1918. See P. Corrigan and D. Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 146.
[35] Levin, *The Spectre of Democracy*, 39, 55.
[36] Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, 8.
[37] Barber, *A Right to Representation*, 11. Even Gladstone claimed to be offended when accused of being a 'democrat' during the 1884 debates. See Levin, *The Spectre of Democracy*, 38.
[38] Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, 3. However, the opposite view held, like Disraeli, that suffrage extension to the working class was a 'bulwark against democracy' because it would

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The rise of reform intellectuals

The typical response to all these changes was simply to resist granting any concessions toward greater mass participation, often through active repression. But past the mid-point of the century it was becoming increasingly apparent that the scope of the social changes made outright repression less and less viable. Some conservatives and liberals now argued that reforms like mass suffrage were inevitable, and what was key was to make sure that society's 'best citizens' would be in a position to influence, direct and lead a mass electorate. Alexis de Tocqueville argued in the 1840s that working class suffrage was the key to stability in France and that exclusion from political power made the lower orders more susceptible to demagoguery and extremism. Later J.S. Mill would argue similarly that political inclusion was the safest response to the threat of social upheaval from the working class. But both accompanied their calls for an expanded suffrage with advocacy of proportional voting reforms as a means to assure the continued dominance of "men of superior intellect and character, the very elite of the country" who would then influence the 'uninstructed classes.'[39] Though the masses would undoubtedly form the voting majority, a proportional system would allow the election of independent-minded, educated members whom Mill insisted would exercise decisive moral influence well beyond their numbers.

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help erode class consciousness and orient workers toward middle class values and acceptance of inequality. See F.B. Smith, *The Making of the Second Reform Bill,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 233. More rare were Conservatives like Lord Derby, PM at the time of the Second Reform Bill, who referred to a concept of 'Conservative Democracy' in the House, much to the horror of opponents and supporters alike. See Robert McKenzie and Allan Silver, *Angels in Marble: Working Class Conservatives in Urban England,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 36.

[39] Barber, *A Right to Representation,* 4, 14; Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945,* 43. For an expanded treatment of this theme for Britain, see Ted R. Bromund, "Uniting the whole people: proportional representation in Great Britain, 1884-5, reconsidered," *Historical Research,* 74:183 (February 2001), 77-94.

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De Tocqueville and Mill's rather virtuous assessments of the potential impacts of proportional voting were ignored by the politicians and powerful elites who exhibited any interest in the reform. The latter tended to examine the issue in more mundane and ruthless terms. As Jenifer Hart notes, early British supporters of voting system reform were more typically anti-democratic Whigs and Conservatives than suffrage advocates. When Thomas Hare released his 1857 pamphlet on the question, the main criticism it elicited was that it did not address how to prevent working class votes from swamping everyone else if suffrage were extended.[40] Anti-democrats would prove a decisive influence in the adoption of the limited vote in 1867, which they understood as a reform that would seriously compromise the minor extension of the suffrage being passed at the same time.[41] Thus early on, anti-democratic elements saw in voting system reform another institutional means to limit working class influence on politics, hardly different from franchise restrictions, plural voting or gerrymandering.

In addition to the contributions of intellectuals and reform-minded politicians, the unstable political conditions in Europe and Anglo-American countries in the nineteenth century also spawned countless public advocacy groups. Associations dedicated to voting system reform emerged at various junctures - 1865 in Switzerland, 1881 in Belgium, 1884 in Britain and 1893 in the United States - typically in response to anomalous election results or reform opportunities. The Swiss and Belgian organizations quickly organized international conferences on PR, while the American group actually emerged from a Proportional Representation Congress held in conjunction with the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.[42] These reformers, more than politicians, tended to cast their proposals in terms of justice, fairness, and progress. For

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[40] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945*, 1, 29.

[41] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945*, 76; H. Cox, *A History of the Reform Bills of 1866 and 1867*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1868), 271, 275; Smith, *The Making of the Second Reform Bill*, 212-14.

[42] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe*, 1-2; Barber, *A Right to Representation*, 31.

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European reformers, the problems were seen primarily as technical - plurality and majority voting simply could not handle the complex tasks of representation now expected of them. With party, locality, language, religion and class all vying for political representation in places like Belgium and Switzerland, reformers underlined how only proportional voting systems really made sense.[43] By contrast, Anglo-American reformers tended to have a broader set of complaints. Though initially given a boost in the United States by the poor showing of Populist Party candidates in the early 1890s, debate quickly moved toward more general criticisms of politics.[44] Some blamed plurality for discouraging good candidates from running for office, or fomenting the rise of parties and corrupt political machines that ultimately limited what individual representatives could do. PR, then, would allow a 'better class' of politician to emerge and limit the power of the 'machines.' These views easily shaded off and blended into the anti-democratic ideas of the age. American reformer Simon Sterne was eager to further voting reform in the US to better represent the educated minority and protect 'democracy from the demos.'[45]

On the whole, reform advocates were not terribly influential. Most toiled in obscurity for decades printing pamphlets and writing letters to the editor but in vain. Even a high profile reformer like John Stuart Mill was ridiculed when he raised proportional representation as issue in the House of Commons in 1867 during his sole term as an MP.[46] Reformers, even sophisticated political thinkers like Mill, tended to suffer from a naïve optimism about the ease of voting system reform. Convinced that their arguments were logically irrefutable and that their cause was just, reformers blamed

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[43] Hoag and Hallett, *Proportional Representation*, 64-7.

[44] For a representative sample of both American and Canadian versions of such views, see the extensive appendix to S. Fleming (ed.), *An Appeal to the Canadian Institute on the Rectification of Parliament*, (Toronto: Copp-Clark Company, 1892).

[45] Barber, *A Right to Representation*, 19-20.

[46] Feuchtwanger, "Electoral systems: an Anglo-German comparison, 1867-1933," 195-6; Jones, *The Politics of Reform 1884*, 95. When the limited vote was debated in the House Mill voted for it, though he was frustrated with the pragmatic tenor of the deliberations.

their lack of success on the ignorance of the public and the political class.[47] As a result, they thought they had only to attend more meetings and educate more members of the political and social elites and success would surely follow. In this the British voting system designer Thomas Hare was a typical reformer, tireless in his advocacy whether in print, through public meetings or in political committees. The British Proportional Representation Society (PRS) also exhibited this enthusiasm and naïve optimism that reform was primarily a matter of education and advocacy, particularly with the political class. Formed in 1884 to take advantage of the government's commitment to political reform in the coming session of parliament, the PRS distributed 160,000 pamphlets in their first year of operation, and signed up 184 MPs and 30 peers as members.[48] But as Andrew Jones notes in *The Politics of Reform 1884*, the PRS proved to be largely 'irrelevant, supine and inept' when it came to influencing the key political reforms of that year, largely because the reformers' naive focus on education meant they did not address more fundamental questions of social and political power.[49] Where reformers do appear influential, as when a few Swiss cantons adopted PR in the 1890s, that influence tended to be primarily technical.[50] Reformers and their efforts cannot be credited as either the driving force or the catalyst for the changes.

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[47] This view comes through clearly in the early American reform journal, *The Proportional Representation Review*, which issued quarterly from 1893 to 1896 (the journal folded in 1896 but was revived in 1914). For instance, in explaining the long delay between the formation of the Swiss PR society and their first success - a span of nearly thirty years - longtime reformer Ernest Naville blamed 'inveterate mental habits': "The principle that the majority ruled, that is, that the final decision should rest with the majority, was applied by an erroneous process of reasoning to the elections of representatives, which should be proportional to be just. It required a long time to destroy this grave confusion of ideas and to rend the veil which habit had woven to prevent the seeing of the truth ... The reform also had a fight to win against the spirit of party, against the partisans and against the sum total of inherited habitual party conditions." See Ernest Naville, "The Situation in Switzerland," *PR Review*, 2:8 (September 1895), 108-9.

[48] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945*, 102-3.

[49] Actually, the quote is from Hart who characterizes Jones' views this way. See Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945*, 101. Though Bromund characterizes the PRS as largely populated by 'true believers' and difficult personalities, he suggests Jones is too harsh in his condemnation of the reformers, suggesting instead that their limited success had more to do with the diverse nature of their political coalition than any major faults of strategy. See Bromund, "Uniting the whole people: proportional representation in Great Britain, 1884-5, reconsidered," 92-3.

[50] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe*, 2-3, 138.

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After the failure of their reform efforts in 1867 both Mill and Hare became increasingly disillusioned with the traditional political elites and began re-evaluating their views of the working class. Mill was surprised to discover that working men's organizations, unlike his political colleagues in parliament, took seriously proposals for voting system reform and had little trouble coming to grips with the intricacies of the systems.[51] Hare joined with the Reform League, a body with some middle class support but mostly working class membership, to sponsor a conference on voting system reform in 1868 that eventually gave rise to the first British reform association, the Representative Reform Association. Working with the recently formed Labour Representation League, a group committed to electing working class men to parliament, their pressure eventually brought a partial PR bill before the House of Commons in 1872, though it gained just 26 votes in support.[52] This working class consideration of proportional voting systems was not confined just to Britain. As working class, labour and socialist parties emerged across Europe, they quickly championed voting system reform, specifically PR, as a means of facilitating their entry to legislatures.[53] This led to some rather uneasy reform coalitions. Hare and others found it a challenge to balance the anti-working class appeal of reform with this new pro-working class dimension.[54]

In summary, conventional accounts of nineteenth century voting system reform place too much focus on calls for minority representation and the actions of reformers and their organizations - neither were of great importance. Cases like Denmark, where nationalist aspirations trumped minority representation in fueling reform, have simply

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[51] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945*, 48-9.
[52] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945*, 62-4, 71.
[53] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe*, 214-5. Carstairs suggests that the attitudes of socialist and social democrats toward proportional representation varied, particularly as they came closer to gaining power. Yet by his own reckoning, the Swedish Social Democrats were the only exception to an otherwise solid core of support for PR from the European left in this period, and even this conclusion is disputed by others.
[54] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945*, 62-3.

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been misunderstood, while consideration of reform in the reconstruction-era southern US, or the implementation of new voting systems in Britain, Illinois and Ontario, all suggest explanations based on minority representation obscure more than they reveal. These successful reforms were relatively minor and designed to benefit the party introducing them rather than embody any principles. When they proved ineffective or threatened to allow unacceptable political forces into legislatures, they were quickly repealed. Nor were reformers or their organizations terribly influential. Where voting system reform did strike a chord however was on either side of the democracy debate, with anti-democrats increasingly interested in a variety of voting system reforms as one among many methods to marginalize and limit possible extensions of the vote to the working class, while left forces advocated PR specifically to ease their entry into the political arena. It is this tension that would prove much more decisive than minority representation in the battles for voting system reform that began in the late nineteenth century and spread across western countries.

The threat of the working class and democracy

Interest in voting system reform had mushroomed by the turn of the century, with a number of Swiss cantons adopting PR in the 1890s and a dramatic, last-minute conversion to a mild form of PR nationally in Belgium in 1899. These accomplishments cannot be explained by either the actions of reformers or the representational deficiencies of their majority voting systems. Both countries had witnessed long periods of dogged advocacy for reform and longstanding problems with representation.[55] What was

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[55] Swiss reformers first organized in 1865 and quickly articulated a now familiar list of grievances against their majority voting system: distorted party results, poor representation of religious and ethnic minorities, etc. Belgian reformers established their association in 1881 and essentially did the same, highlighting problems of language and ethnic representation. But the Swiss waited until 1892 to see their first conversion to proportional voting, while Belgium adopted PR nationally late in 1899, literally in the very last days of the nineteenth century.

distinctive in the 1890s was the rise nearly everywhere in the western world of an organized working class and working class parties. The perception of the threat this new class posed and its relative strength vis-a-vis other classes would prove decisive in voting system reforms in the 1890s and beyond.

Of course, working class pressure for political reform had been influential throughout the nineteenth century. While scholars generally recognize the key working class role in specifically revolutionary upheavals, particularly on the European continent, they have failed to appreciate its influence on what appear today as more mundane institutional reforms like suffrage.[56] For instance, much work contrasts the violent nature of political change in Europe with an allegedly more peaceful approach in Britain. But British elites were just as uneasy with the social changes wrought by capitalist industrialization as their European counterparts.[57] Some contemporaries in 1815 described Britain as the most politically disturbed locale in Europe, with widespread elite fears of insurrection. Attempts to organize publicly were met with police repression and a number of participants were killed.[58] One commentator described the British system as 'aristocratic government tempered by rioting.'[59] The revolutionary outbursts on the European continent in the 1830s resonated in Britain as well, leading to mounting public demonstrations and the 'Captain Swing' riots in rural areas.[60] By 1832, an organized public meeting for franchise reform attracted 200,000 people, a key influence on the First

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[56] Exceptions include Rueschemeyer et al, Capitalist Development and Democracy, 8, 59; and Eley, Forging Democracy, 10.

[57] Rueschemeyer et al, Capitalist Development and Democracy, 95-7.

[58] Goldstein, Political Repression in 19th Century Europe, 114-5.

[59] Goldstein, Political Repression in 19th Century Europe, 105. David Bayley notes that [t]he first two decades of the nineteenth century were ... a period of great unrest in England. A Prime Minister was killed in the lobby of the House of Commons in 1812; Luddite riots the same year brought more troops to the Midlands than Wellesley had taken to the Peninsula in 1808; and the Peterloo massacre of 1819 showed the bankruptcy of the existing police system." See D. Bayley, "The Police and Political Development in Europe," in C. Tilley (ed.), The Formation of National States in Western Europe, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 357.

[60] Levin, The Spectre of Democracy, 27; Goldstein, Political Repression in 19th Century Europe, 157-8.

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Great Reform Act passed later that year.[61] Mass meetings and public demonstrations would also play a key role in pushing British reforms in 1867 and 1884.[62]

The revolutionary insurrections of the 1820s, 1830s and 1848 were examples of working class power and influence that fueled a dialectic of repression and reform by increasing elite fears of the urban 'mob.'[63] But elite responses were not limited to these; strategic concessions were accompanied by the development of new military and police power. In the face of what appeared to be revolution elites sometimes responded with strategic concessions to the coalition of interests, or particular members of the coalition like the middle class, leading to franchise reforms, relaxation of press restrictions or limits on political organizing, and, in 1848, even a short-lived capitulation to liberal government. But at the same time, governments invested considerable resources in developing a permanent military and police infrastructure, one that could more effectively respond to social upheaval.[64] On the other side, dissenting elements found it difficult to hold or expand on these concessions for long after the events themselves. Even the remarkable revolutions of 1848, which successfully established liberal regimes across Europe, proved hard to sustain after the immediate revolutionary conditions had receded.[65] With the violent suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871, traditional insurrectionary politics faced new, frighteningly lethal limits.

Rioting was essentially a holdover from a pre-capitalist era when peasants would intervene directly to re-assert a customary price on the market or force the sale of local goods to local buyers. As E.P. Thompson points out, 'riot' was often a misnomer for what actually occurred. In most cases, the whole process was conducted in an orderly

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[61] Corrigan and Sayer, *The Great Arch*, 147-8.
[62] Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, 229, 258; E. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 261-2.
[63] Levin, *The Spectre of Democracy*, 55.
[64] Bayley, "The Police and Political Development in Europe," 360.
[65] Golstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, 187-91.

fashion, with even the offending merchant ultimately getting the 'just' price for his wares.[66] But the shift to an increasingly urban society meant that an urban 'riot' was potentially much larger. Demonstrations of 10,000 and 100,000 people emerged across Europe at different times, frightening the middle and upper classes. For their part, early working class activists did not envision creating a new society by these actions, as much as forcing a return to the better parts of the old one. Artisans and tradesmen sought a return of their privileged positions in controlling production, while others sought land enough to assure economic independence for their families through a locally-controlled economy. The permanence of the new capitalist economy and the national and international direction of the reforms it inspired were not immediately clear, and for most of the early nineteenth century resistance to it harkened back to an idyllic localism where the height of progress was a plot of land for every family.[67]

By the 1830s Britain was both the most advanced industrialized country and the first to see a shift in the direction of working class agitation. The rise of Chartism, the first working class movement for democratic government, was a direct response to the repression of early trade unions in Britain.[68] As organizers witnessed employers use their influence with the state to crush unions, they recognized that workers would need that influence as well to further their efforts.[69] The Chartists demanded full male suffrage, a secret ballot, and government accountable to the voters, and they organized thousands of working people to demand it with petitions, public meetings, and by putting pressure on the political class. These Chartist demands would eventually form the standard program for the left everywhere, though many decades would pass before the working classes of Europe or Anglo-American countries posed the kind of threat that would inspire

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[66] E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common,* (New York: The New Press, 1991), 224-7.
[67] Eley, *Forging Democracy,* 18-9.
[68] Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe,* 159-60.
[69] D. Thompson, *The Chartists,* (London: Temple Smith, 1984), 20-1.

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significant institutional and democratic concessions from political elites. This is a key point. The debate over working class strategy was also linked to working class strength. The pre-1860s working class was often powerful enough to sponsor serious revolts but was too small and structurally weak to maintain them. Only with the take-off of capitalist economies in the 1850s and 1860s was the basis laid for a new organization of the working class.

From the 1860s to the 1890s, working class organizations multiplied and took on a more permanent form. The improved economic conditions of the 1850s and 1860s created more space for union organizing and also witnessed the emergence of the first working class political parties. States initially responded to these developments with repression, outlawing strikes and union organizing.[70] Germany's anti-socialist law barred its emerging Social Democratic Party from publicly organizing, though they continued to contest elections. But the economic downturn of the 1870s and 1880s altered the balance of power within European countries. As countries moved away from free trade and toward various kinds of protectionism, the pressures of nation-building and state consolidation forced elites to ease up on repressive laws against unions and working class politics.[71] In fact, in this national context of capitalist development, unions were better placed strategically to finally wield enough power to force recognition from the state, or at the very least a greater degree of tolerance.[72] In some cases like Germany, social welfare measures were introduced in a deliberate attempt to win working class support away from radical politics, even while restrictions on unions and left party activity remained in place.[73]

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[70] Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, 238-9.
[71] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 62-3, 74-5; Rueschemeyer *et al*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 79.
[72] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 62-3.
[73] G. Steinmetz, "Workers and the Welfare State in Imperial Germany," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 40 (Fall 1991), 29-30, 36.

The period was also characterized by much debate in working class circles about appropriate political strategy. In Britain, working men that could vote were pursued by both Liberal and Conservative parties, though the first 'labour men' elected worked exclusively with the Liberals, while a significant minority agitated for a separate labour party.[74] In Europe, debate divided between anarchists who called for direct action against employers and the state, and Marx's First International which argued for the organization of a mass party that would mobilize working people and focus their strength. Subsequent developments would demonstrate the deep influence of both approaches, though the mass party model would clearly dominate. But these debates were no more important than the deep, structural changes that were remaking the working class itself, changing how and where it lived, how it interacted amongst its members, and its orientation to the national state.[75] Eric Hobsbawm argues that by the 1890s, distinctive national working classes had emerged across Europe, reflecting the particular historical struggles over capitalism and the governing institutions in each country. But more importantly, the refocusing of formerly locally-identified working people to a national identity and state project, particularly when it was embodied in a mass party, dramatically increased the power and threat of the working class.[76]

The 1890s were the turning point. The Second International was formed in Paris in 1889 and largely set the agenda for left political parties in western industrialized countries for the century to come. Though participants were committed to replacing capitalism with a socialist organization of society, their immediate goals included the establishment of democratic government, a peaceful approach toward capturing political

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[74] McKenzie and Silver, *Angels in Marble*, 40, 43-56; Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People 1880-1935*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 8, 140-1. See also John Vincent, "The Effect of Second Reform Act in Lancashire," *The Historical Journal*, 11:1 (1968), 84-94.

[75] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 31-2, 58.

[76] E.J. Hobsbawm, "The Making of the Working Class," *Uncommon People: Resistance, Rebellion and Jazz,* (1984; London: Weidenfeld, 1998), 60-1, 67, 69-70.

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power, regulation of the labour market, the introduction of a variety of social programs and a host of other objectives that would eventually come to pass.[77] Despite their focus on peaceful methods and democratic objectives, the founding of the Second International and their designation of May 1st as a workers' holiday aroused widespread fears of revolution. Some elites were convinced that the first May Day scheduled for 1890 was really an effort to mobilize working people to insurrection and revolt.[78] More shrewd observers understood the real threat behind what was emerging - that a mass party drawing resources from an emergent national union movement might seriously erode the traditional financial and organizational advantages of the old liberal and conservative cadre parties, perhaps eliminating the need for insurrection at all.

Of course the idea of a mass party was not enough to change anything; its emergence depended on many factors. Class structure clearly mattered, with Germany and Britain's urban-based proletariat more easily organized than France's more decentralized workers.[79] The structure, organization and location of national industry was influential for how it contributed to the remaking of working class life and consciousness along the lines set out by Hobsbawm, facilitating the emergence of a national class consciousness, as in Germany and Britain, or the survival of strong traditions of localism, as in France and Switzerland. Yet class structures themselves emerged historically and timing - or the sequence of historical development - would also prove an important factor in the formation of working class parties.[80]

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[77] D. Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, xxi.

[78] Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, 253.

[79] M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Volume II, The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 667.

[80] The literature on class development highlights how Britain's slow economic development may have better facilitated incorporating the working class into the political system, whereas the rapid German industrialization contributed to more rapid social dislocation and class polarization. Meanwhile French capitalism remained less urban and proletarianized, partly because of the resilience of the small-holder peasantry and the success of artisans and rural powerbrokers in maintaining some of their regulatory privileges. In settler countries like the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, capitalist development was more uneven, though state and class responses were muted by the absence of a traditional

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In addition to class structure, the historical interplay of the various classes was also an important factor fueling working class party formation. In Britain, class compromise between Liberals and Conservatives, between urban industrialists and the landed class, was smoothed by the predominantly capitalist nature of both activities in that country by the nineteenth century.[81] The political victory of free trade in 1846 essentially settled the question of how government policies vis-a-vis the economy would be changed, a problem that would bedevil most of Europe for another half century. The recognition of these parameters, then, led both Liberals and Conservatives to seek working class support electorally, though neither sanctioned that this was anything akin to democracy.[82] These overtures delayed the emergence of independent working class representation in Britain for some decades while the most privileged strata of the workforce explored what they could get from the status quo parties.[83] Wherever a certain

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landed or aristocratic class and the need to attract and keep immigrants, factors contributing to somewhat malleable franchise laws and a partial integration of the emergent working classes. See Eley, *Forging Democracy* , 56-7; I. Katznelson, "Working-Class Formations: Constructing Cases and Comparisons," in I. Katznelson and A.R. Zolberg (eds.), *Working Class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 31; Rueschemeyer *et al*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 139-40.

[81] Rueschemeyer *et al*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 84-5.

[82] M. Cowling, *1867 Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution: The Passing of the Second Reform Bill*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 48-52, 58-60; J. Lawrence, "Popular politics and the limits of party: Wolverhampton, 1867-1900, in E. Biagini and A. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular radicalism, organized labour and party politics in Britain, 1850-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 76. Before the adoption of the secret ballot, both parties were known to resort to coercive measures to gain working class support, including having Liberal and Tory employers and landlords use threats over work and housing. However, Hanham also cites a number of examples where ignoring working class voting strength cost Liberals and Tories seats as early as 1868. See Hanham, *Elections and Party Management*, 95; and Patrick Joyce, "The Factory Politics of Lancashire in the Later Nineteenth Century," *The Historical Journal*, 18:3 (September 1975), 525-53.

[83] Rueschemeyer *et al*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 95-7. Hanham reviews the period from 1867 to 1900 in his chapter on 'working class radicalism'; 323-343; as does J. Shepherd, "Labour and parliament: the Lib-Labs as the first working-class MPs, 1885-1906," in Biagini and Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism*, 187-213. However Conservatives also made appeals to working class voters; see McKenzie and Silver, *Angels in Marble: Working Class Conservatives*, 43-56. Though by the 1890s, considerable pressure for separate labour representation was building up in Britain as well, particularly after a series of anti-labour court decisions in 1895, and the explicitly socialist Social Democratic Federation began to make headway in some municipal elections. For national efforts see James Hinton, *Labour and Socialism: A History of the British Labour Movement, 1867-1974*, (Brighton: Wheatesheaf Books, 1983), 68, 70-2; for

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stratum of the working class had gained political rights by the mid-to-late nineteenth century - Switzerland, Australia, Canada, the United States - their participation in elections affected both how they understood their own political options and how political elites understood them. Opposition to working class participation in politics could be heard in elite circles in these countries too but experience, particularly the rather modest form of lib-labism that emerged in Britain and her colonies, tended to counter much of the criticism.[84]

On the continent, Germany and France entertained very different class relations. Germany's rapid industrialization was premised on steel production, initially for railways but with a view for export. Britain's control of overseas trade, however, particularly steel markets, threatened to limit Germany's growth and helped push development toward military spending and shipbuilding.[85] This contributed to a strong state and a weak liberal bourgeoisie, while the landed class was split between the national state building project and a defence of state power, particularly the dominance of Prussia.[86] Bismark's enfranchisement of all working men in 1871 was part of his struggle to strengthen the German central state against the German states, but neither conservatives nor liberals

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early municipal labour representation see P. Thane, "Labour and local politics: radicalism, democracy and social reform, 1880-1914," in Biagini and Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism*, 244-70.

[84] Opposition to working class participation in politics emerged in all settler countries with the rise of working class organization and strength, even the United States. In *The Right to Vote*, A. Keyssar reviews how differently immigrants to the US were treated, depending on whether they were destined for rural farming or urban labouring, and cites a number of influential periodicals and organizations calling for a restriction of working class suffrage. In Canada, despite the explicitly undemocratic claims of the founding fathers, emergent Liberal and Conservative parties quickly began vying for working class votes, though within limits. See Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*, 170; G. Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1980). For New Zealand lib-labism, see B. Brown, *The Rise of New Zealand Labour*, (Wellington: Price Milburn, 1962), 2-4; and B. Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*, (Aukland: Aukland University Press, 1980), 13-4.

[85] Rueschemeyer *et al*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 82, 107; Volker R. Berghahn, "On the Societal Functions of Wilhemine Armaments Policy," in Georg Iggers (ed.), *The Social History of Politics: Critical Perspectives in West German Historical Writing Since 1945*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 159, 167, 171; Martin Kitchen, *The Political Economy of Germany 1815-1914*, (London: Croom-Helm, 1978), 225-32.

[86] Rueschemeyer *et al*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 114-5.

offered much to workers.[87] In fact, Germany's rapid industrialization and military capitalism brutally destroyed artisan and tradesmen power bases, effectively proletarianizing them. Forced into urban areas under desperate conditions, they turned their experience to political organizing with socialist parties.[88] France, on the other hand, never completely broke with the property settlement arising out of the French Revolution. With a large, somewhat viable rural peasantry, a good measure of rural and local economic regulation survived, limiting capitalist expansion and urban growth.[89] Meanwhile, the urban working class were often times militant but weak, at times pushing change to the point of revolution, only to see reaction restored by the superior numbers and power of rural areas. The experience of the Paris Commune in 1871 was a particularly powerful and long-lasting lesson. After the killing of over 20,000 Parisian participants in the Commune by French and German soldiers, French workers remained keenly aware of their minority position in the state. They spent the rest of the nineteenth century either helping to secure Republican victories against the Conservatives, despite the indifference of Republican leaders to working class issues, or avoiding formal politics altogether in favour of direct action.[90]

Though not all countries produced working class parties in the 1890s, increased working class participation in elections did make political contests more competitive, even under restricted franchises. In both France and Britain the number of uncontested

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[87] Collier, *Paths Towards Democracy*, 102-3. However, Bismark kept control over the political system despite enfranchising working men by maintaining control over the executive – the legislature could only advise, they could not control the government.

[88] Katznelson, "Working-Class Formations: Constructing Cases and Comparisons," 39-40.

[89] Katznelson, "Working-Class Formations: Constructing Cases and Comparisons," 33-4; Rueschemeyer *et al*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 87-8. Michael Mann notes the France's proletariat was also comparatively more decentralized, and not exclusively reliant on wage-labour. See Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Volume II, The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914*, 667.

[90] Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, 270-1; Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 70; Rueschemeyer *et al*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 90-1; Katznelson, "Working-Class Formations: Constructing Cases and Comparisons," 34-5.

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constituencies plummeted in the late nineteenth century, despite the lack of a left party.[91]

In Germany, the rise of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) forced many more contests to a second ballot to determine a winner.[92] This sudden spike in working class participation caused alarm everywhere it registered, though the 'perception' of threat posed was magnified wherever left parties were making gains. The SPD's first election after the lifting of Bismark's anti-socialist law witnessed them dramatically increase their support - by 1898 they were the most popular party in Germany in terms of the popular vote.[93] In the 1890s socialist parties elected members in Sweden, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland and Italy, while labour members were elected in the Australian colonies and Britain.

The success of the left was primarily due to their innovative organization. As a rule, nineteenth century political parties had no permanent existence; they came together only at election time or as loose agglomerations of political interest within parliament. But left parties of the 1890s, and even earlier in the case of Germany, embarked on the political organization of the masses through permanent, hierarchical party structures.[94] Left parties did not just fight elections, they attempted to provide organization and leadership in all aspects of working class life on an ongoing basis. Germany's Social Democrats organized a myriad of cultural, educational and social services in working

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[91] A. Cole and P. Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections Since 1789*, (Aldershot: Gower, 1989), 71; M. Pugh, *The Evolution of the British Electoral System, 1832-1987*, (London: The Historical Association, 1990), 16: Trevor Lloyd, "Uncontested Seats in British General Elections 1852-1910," *The Historical Journal*, 8:2 (1965), 260-5. In Britain up to 300 seats typically remained uncontested in the 1860s, slipping to just 43 in 1885. In France 80-90% of seats failed to go to a second ballot in the 1870s-80s, but that figure had dropped to 60-70% by the 1890s.

[92] Feuchtwanger, "Electoral systems: an Anglo-German comparison, 1867-1933," 198. Nearly all contests were settled on the first ballot before the rise of the SDP as mass party; by 1912 less than 50% were.

[93] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 79-80.

[94] Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties*, xxxvi-xxxvii, 1-2. There were exceptions. In Britain, both the Liberals and Conservatives established nascent party organizations that sought to mobilize an increasingly mass electorate, particularly after the 1867 reforms, but these efforts paled in comparison to the more systematic approaches that would be inaugurated by left parties. For discussion of these early efforts see M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties, Volume 1: England*, 1902; and J. Lawrence, "Popular politics and the limitations of party: Wolverhampton, 1867-1900, in Biagini and Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism*, 65-85.

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class neighbourhoods and through affiliated trade unions. As early as 1877 the SPD had 40,000 party members, published forty newspapers with a combined circulation of 150,000, and had links to unions with 50,000 members. By the 1890s, socialist union membership swelled to 900,000.[95] Though less powerful than Germany's left, socialist parties across Europe served similar functions and increased in popularity during this period, particularly in Belgium and Sweden.

But the threat of left parties in the 1890s cannot be measured simply by counting party members or elected officials. The threat of the left was also by the example they set both within and outside party ranks. Left parties were the first essentially democratic political organizations. As mass organizations, they opened up political parties to their supporters by allowing anyone membership.[96] Members were key to party policy formation, the recruitment of candidates, and to the development of leadership cadres within the party.[97] Through the use of extensive democratic procedures within their organizations, left parties exhibited the kind of democratic accountability they would champion for society as a whole.[98] Their increasing ability to use a democratic organization to mobilize the working class electorally eventually created a 'contagion from the left' as other political forces had to reckon with their efforts. Later, confessional and minority parties would mimic the left's mass organization, with conventional liberal and conservative forces following.[99] Left parties also forced greater discipline on all other political competitors because they typically voted as a bloc in parliament. Their tight party discipline gave them an advantage against the 'loose fish' and independents that

[95] Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, 322-3.
[96] Though initially new members had to be sponsored by an existing member, these restrictions gave way early in the twentieth century. See Duverger, *Political Parties*, 72.
[97] Duverger, *Political Parties*, 62-3.
[98] Though there were often tortuous debates and splits about just how such democracy should be practiced. See Logie Barrow and Ian Bullock, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement, 1880-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[99] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 113.

populated late nineteenth century legislatures. As the left increased its electoral strength, other parties were forced to tighten party discipline and fewer independents were elected.[100]

The perceived threat of left parties in the 1890s was also heightened by the diversity of their political tactics. The lively debate within socialist circles between anarchists and political party adherents produced support in some locales for direct action in the form of a political mass strike.[101] The party influence here was to focus these efforts around state level reforms, particularly demands for democratic government, including at a minimum full male suffrage, the abolition of upper houses, full executive accountability to the elected legislature, payment for members, and an end to the state harassment of dissidents.[102] Though eschewed by the large and influential German socialists, political strikes eventually took place in Belgium, Sweden, Finland and Russia, with varying degrees of success.

The idea of a political strike first emerged out of riots in Belgium and the Netherlands in 1886. Though these were initially not political, socialist influence eventually gave shape to a host of working class grievances. Socialists continued to organize protests in Belgium to demand male suffrage every year thereafter, culminating in massive, country-wide general strikes in 1892 and 1893, involving upwards of 200,000 people. In the face of these paralyzing strikes, Belgian political elites finally granted

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[100] Duverger, *Political Parties*, 169-71. Though the tenor of Duverger's comments tend to equate party discipline with authoritarianism, he does grant that socialist parties (as opposed to communist parties) have acted democratically, and that struggles for political influence on the part of the working classes have required disciplined organization. In a particularly insightful comment he notes that "[f]or the masses the classic contrast between freedom and discipline which appeals to the middle classes has no meaning: they won freedom by discipline, not only technically, because of their size, but sociologically because of the mental attitude of their members; the parties of the masses had a natural tendency to be disciplined parties." The 'mental attitude' Duverger refers to is the historical learning process of working people discovering over time that only by disciplined collective efforts could they achieve anything.

[101] Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 20-1.

[102] Wolfgang Abendroth, *A Short History of the European Working Class*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 52-3.

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male suffrage in 1893, but added enough plural voting for the rich that governing power remained safely in their hands despite the reform.[103] In Sweden, socialists and liberals organized a 'People's Parliament' in 1893 and 1896 that brought out more voters than the actual state elections, demonstrating a groundswell of public support for democratic government.[104] Though neither Belgian nor Swedish efforts produced democratic government, they did demonstrate the power of the left to organize significant levels of public participation and in doing so influence public debate. Traditional political elites, increasingly resigned to the fact that political repression was no longer viable, scrambled for ways to respond.

The rise of class politics and voting system reform: Sweden, Germany, and Belgium

One consequence of the emergence of all these conditions was that voting system reform finally became a serious issue. For instance, various proposals for proportional voting had circulated in Sweden ever since Denmark adopted a quasi-PR system in the 1850s but it was only in the face of left organizing in the 1890s that the discussion turned serious.[105] Bishop Gottfrid Billing, described by some contemporaries as the 'father-confessor' to conservative political forces, was an early promoter of PR as a kind of insurance against democratic politics.[106] In 1891 he told the Rikstag that if suffrage were extended "guarantees ought to be established in order that political power will not, in the future, belong to only one class of citizens..." Billing proved quite creative in fashioning

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[103] Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, 262-3.

[104] Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, 268; Douglas V. Verney, *Parliamentary Reform in Sweden, 1866-1921*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 111.

[105] Nor was the early Swedish left at this time the model of moderation it would later become. Goldstein quotes Swedish socialist leader and future PM Hjalmar Branting in 1886 declaring that "[u]niversal suffrage is the price with which the bourgeoisie can buy a settlement through administration in place of liquidation ordered by the court of revolution." See Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, 268.

[106] Verney, *Parliamentary Reform in Sweden, 1866-1921*, 139.

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guarantees. His list included not just PR, but plural voting scaled to income, military service as a pre-condition for voting, a raised age for voting, and the elimination of pay for lower house members.[107] In 1896 the government sponsored a bill that promised (but largely failed to deliver) suffrage extension and the introduction of proportional voting. However, PR was to be used only in urban areas, the main source of liberal and socialist strength, a move clearly designed to weaken them. In the end, even these reforms proved too challenging for Sweden's conservative elites, though PR continued to arouse interest.[108]

Debate over voting system reform also increased markedly in Germany in the 1890s. Though long advocated by the Social Democrats, PR only became a serious issue in response to the SPD's rising electoral strength after the end of the anti-socialist prohibition in 1890. Attempts by Conservatives to return to repressive methods of dealing with the left were dealt a blow in 1894 when the legislature failed to pass a rather ambiguous anti-revolution bill that would have outlawed attempts to "subvert the existing social order."[109] Increasingly, middle class opposition to the left eschewed violent means and focused on institutional reforms and manipulations to minimize their influence.[110] Principle had little to do with the rising interest in PR outside of SPD circles. As Ziegler notes, "In almost every case [in Germany] P.R. was used to combat the socialist movement, appearing chiefly where the latter threatened the interests of dominant social and political groups."[111] This anti-left reform effort made its first appearance in the 1890s

[107] Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 32-3.

[108] Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 36-8. The plan would effect a double blow to the left. As they were strong in urban areas, PR would in effect reduce their representation as the current system tended to over-represent them, and better represent the right as a minority interest. Yet denying PR to the rural areas would mean that the left would not capture any support as a minority interest, while Conservatives would continue to enjoying over-representation there as the dominant electoral force.

[109] Ziegler, "Proportional Representation in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany, 1871-1920," 32.

[110] G. Eley, "The Social Construction of Democracy in Germany, 1871-1933," in G.R. Andrews and H. Chapman (eds.), The Social Construction of Democracy, 1870-1990, (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 106.

[111] Ziegler, "Proportional Representation in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany, 1871-1920," 64.

just where SPD forces had made their most serious advance - the industrial courts. Kaiser William II thought he could weaken the appeal of the socialists if he established some means by which workers could settle disputes with employers. The industrial courts, with members chosen half by workers and half by employers, were supposed to undercut the need and appeal of socialist representation. Just the opposite occurred and SPD members routinely won all the worker-elected seats. To help fragment the working class vote, the city of Frankfurt attempted to switch the voting method for the courts from the traditional German majority system to a proportional system in 1895. Though German courts struck down the change in 1898 as a violation of federal law, government amendments in 1901 opened the way for just this sort of reform.[112] From the turn of the century to the start of World War I in Germany, the conversion to PR voting would advance rapidly at the sub-national level wherever left voting support appeared headed for a majority.[113]

But the most dramatic example of the dynamic that would fuel voting system reform well into the twentieth century occurred in Belgium in late 1899 when, under pressure from the left both electorally and in the streets, the government passed legislation making their small country the first to adopt proportional voting for national elections.[114] The 1899 reform had been preceded by a considerable amount of social

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[112] Ziegler, "Proportional Representation in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany, 1871-1920," 65-6.
[113] Ziegler, "Proportional Representation in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany, 1871-1920," 70-90.
[114] Conventional work on the adoption of PR in Belgium suggests it was produced by the emergence of multiple cleavage lines around religion, language, region and class. The distinctive role of the Belgian left in accelerating the push for institutional reform has been largely overlooked, as has been the literature that makes this case. However, recently some scholars have questioned how distinctive Belgium's left politics in the 1890s really were. In *A House Divided*, C. Strikwerda argues that the unity of Belgium's working class has been generally over-stated, and that workers supported conservative and liberal political projects, as well as socialist efforts. While he is certainly correct to highlight the divisions amongst workers about political party commitments, the existence of such divisions does not really diminish the important historical role of the Belgian left in this period. The point is, Belgium's Socialist party managed to organize successful demonstrations that achieved political results. Longstanding social divisions based on religion, language and region had not managed to produce either franchise reforms or more proportional voting - only the rise of organized social divisions based around class managed to tip the reform scales. See C.

organizing by the left and important changes to the party system. The franchise reforms of 1893 had increased the electorate tenfold, a factor that pushed the Socialists into second place ahead of the Liberals when the first election was held a year later, despite the impact of plural voting. The rise of a strong third party only magnified the anomalous results produced by the country's traditional majority bloc voting system in multi-member ridings, leading to one-sided, all-or-nothing results nearly everywhere.[115]

Not surprisingly, agitation for electoral reform soon recommenced with Liberals anxious to change the voting system in the face of declining support, and Socialists keen to end plural voting to better represent their voting strength.[116] Yet the Catholic government was also unhappy with the status quo, worried that if politics polarized between themselves and the Socialists the left would in a good position to come to power at some point.[117] In 1899 the Catholics introduced a bill very similar to the Swedish one of 1896, proposing PR for those areas where Liberals and Socialists were strong, and a continuation of the multi-member majority system where the government was strong. The opposition balked and Socialists organized mass demonstrations against the government initiative, culminating in a general strike in late fall 1899. In the face of what appeared to be an increasingly chaotic situation, what one historian described as the "most dangerous moment in the history of Belgium in this period," the Prime Minister finally relented, then resigned.[118] The demonstrated strength of the left swept away that last Catholic opposition to proportional voting and a new PM quickly introduced a party

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Strikwerda, *A House Divided: Catholics, Socialists and Flemish Nationalists in Nineteenth-Century Belgium*, (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997).
[115] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe*, 52-3.
[116] Strikwerda, *A House Divided*, 120, 126.
[117] E.H. Kossman, *The Low Countries 1780-1940*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 476.
[118] Kossman, *The Low Countries 1780-1940*, 503; Strikwerda, *A House Divided*, 261. Kossman thought the moment particularly dangerous because "the Liberal party also gave the impression of being ready to accept the risk of revolution" to effect political change.

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list PR system that would cover the whole country.[119] The Liberals achieved their aim but the Socialist demands for an end to plural voting were studiously ignored.[120] Belgium was still far from achieving the minimum conditions for democratic rule at the turn of the century and PR had proven instrumental in keeping the clamor for democracy at bay.

In all three countries - Sweden, Germany and Belgium - the rise of left parties, and the organizational and ideological threat they were perceived to pose by traditional political elites, was key to raising PR as a reform worthy of serious consideration. The perception of the threat was key.[121] Both Britain and France had extensive working class participation in politics but neither perceived it as a threat worthy of considering voting system reform in the 1890s because in both cases left forces were institutionally and organizationally weak.[122] Neither produced a mass party of the left or harnessed the power and organizational strength of the trade union movement to political action in an independent way. Attempts to raise PR during the British reform debates of 1884-5 on

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[119] At the most basic level, party list forms of PR convert the popular vote attained by different parties into proportional levels of legislative representation. Thus, ideally, if a party were to receive 20% of the popular vote, it would receive 20% of the seats in parliament. Concretely, however, party list systems might diverge quite substantially from pure proportionality. A country could be divided into different multi-member constituencies and the PR principle applied only within them (as opposed to being pooled across the country as a whole). Such an approach would discriminate against parties without a strong regional base. In the Belgian example, urban ridings were drawn to maximize anti-socialist representation while the district magnitude (the number of candidates to be elected in a particular riding) of rural areas was kept low precisely to under-represent the left. Thus many have characterized these early Belgian reforms as only a partial-PR system. For details, see Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe*, specifically the chapter on "Belgium."

[120] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe*, 54.

[121] Rueschemeyer *et al, Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 62-3. However, while such 'perceptions of threat' cannot be strictly quantified, they are nonetheless real in their impacts. As the authors note, "[t]hese perceptions are not simply reflections of objective conditions but represent symbolic constructs that are subject to hegemonic and counter-hegemonic contention. Once established, they often remain a potent force for long periods of time."

[122] Panebianco distinguishes left parties in terms of their 'strong' or 'weak' institutionalization. Strong parties - like the German SPD, the French PCF and the Italian PCI - had strong, coherent, independent organizations, and could act 'imperialistically' within their political environments to dominate their potential supporters. Weak parties by contrast - Britain's Labour party, and the French and Italian socialists - were historically more dependent on external organization and had to adapt themselves to their changing environment. See A, Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power*, 110.

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the basis of 'fairness' or 'progress' were treated with disdain and dismissed.[123] Voting reform made even less progress in Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway in this period for similar reasons - the left was simply too weak. When the left did become an electoral threat in those countries, as it would over the next two decades, voting system reform also moved up the agenda.

Where voting system reform did move forward, the strategic context informing its adoption has often been obscured by the seeming cross-party consensus for change.[124] While right and centre parties shifted their views about voting systems in the face of political competition from the left, socialist and labour parties tended to support PR fairly consistently in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Left support for PR was not terribly surprising as it fit well with a larger set of essentially democratic demands that were animated by rhetorical appeals to notions of justice and fairness. PR would lend 'mathematical clarity' to election results and end the distortions of voter preferences created by plurality and majority voting rules. Unions and socialist societies were some of the first organizations to experiment with proportional voting.[125] Certainly most left parties could see that they would be one of the first beneficiaries of such a reform - socialist and labour parties were chronically under-represented before WWI. While some agitated for voting system reform for just such reasons, others thought that 'self interest' was less important, convinced that the left would eventually benefit from a perceived

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[123] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945*, 114-8; Jones, *The Politics of Reform 1884*, 101. Jones suggests that a strong element in the PR leadership group were driven by Liberal Unionist objectives and sought the reform to limit Irish home rule over-representation. Meanwhile other Liberal leaders, like Chamberlain, thought poorly of the limited vote experiment with 'minority representation.' In the end, the shift to single member ridings was seen as a better 'minority representation' strategy to most Liberals and Conservatives. See Jones, *The Politics of Reform 1884*, 102-3; J.P.D. Dunbabin, "Some Implications of the 1885 Shift Towards Single-Member Constituencies: A Note," *The English Historical Review*, 109:430 (February 1994), 89-100; and Bromund, "Uniting the whole people: proportional representation in Great Britain, 1884-5, reconsidered,"89-94.
[124] Thus Carstairs characterized a number of European shifts to PR as uncontroversial because they enjoyed multi-party support. See Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe*, particularly chapters on Scandinavia and Benelux countries.
[125] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 166.

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working-class majority regardless of the voting system, once other barriers to full and equal electoral participation were overcome. Here local conditions help explain the relative strength of different left party commitments to PR, fueling strong support in Germany, and more moderate support everywhere else, typically well behind questions of suffrage and executive accountability.

The only other consideration of PR in the 1890s occurred at the sub-national level in Switzerland and Australia, and both appeared to be a throwback to the pre-class days of voting system reform. In Switzerland PR became a key cantonal reform in the 1890s following its imposition by federal authorities in the Italian border canton of Ticino amid civil war-like conditions. PR had long been popular with Switzerland's minority Catholic population as a defence against the secularizing and centralizing tendencies of the dominant 'radical' or Liberal party.[126] When the Catholic-dominated Conservatives won a decisive majority in the 1889 cantonal elections despite barely more voting support than their opponents, the opposition cried foul. Resentment continued to fester breaking out into armed struggle in 1890, precipitating an occupation by federal troops and the implementation of PR by the federal government.[127] Conventional voting system literature characterizes the affair as a minority representation example *par excellence*, and, indeed, in this case it may be, but they offer little insight into why the longstanding differences between Conservatives and Liberals escalated at this time. Nor do they offer any compelling explanation, other than a kind of contagion effect, as to why other cantons also adopted PR in the late nineteenth century. Instead, this dynamic is assumed to continue fueling the expanding use of PR in Switzerland up to and including its adoption nationally in 1918. Though it is conventional to dismiss the influence of the left

[126] See T. Clarke, "The Unfinished Paradigm: Political Economy of St. Galen," (Cornell: Ph.D. dissertation, 1981), 150, 184; and Georg Lutz, "Switzerland: Introducing Proportional Representation from Below," in J. Colomer (ed.), *The Handbook of Electoral System Design*, (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004), 283-4.
[127] E. Bonjour, H.S. Offler and G.R. Potter, *A Short History of Switzerland*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 308-9.

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in Swiss politics, the 1890s witnessed an increase in radical agitation, strikes, and visible economic decline and urban poverty. J. Steinberg argues that Conservatives and Liberals began making common cause by the late 1880s as "the rise of an industrial proletariat and the spread of slums threatened them both."[128] The adoption of PR in a few Swiss cantons in the 1890s was undeniably related to longstanding religious and social cleavages but the catalyst appears similar to trends in the rest of Europe - fear of the rising power of left forces.

In Australia a temporary experiment with proportional voting was conducted in Tasmania, the colony least affected by the rise of Australia's Labour party.[129] In the more populous colonies like New South Wales Labour members made a dramatic breakthrough in the 1890s, holding the balance of power there as early as 1893.[130] But in Tasmania, as with experiments in Denmark, Britain, the US and Canada earlier in the century, politicians adopted a new form of voting primarily for pragmatic reasons of political self-interest unrelated to principle or fear of the left. In fact, Tasmania's suffrage was much more restrictive than other Australian colonies, including a high property-owning franchise and plural voting. As such, politicized class factors were less important politically than regional divisions on the island colony, with landed interests keen to limit the power of urban centres, though broader themes of social reform influenced the decision as well. After a few trials the system was repealed as too much trouble and

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[128] J. Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?, Second Edition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 51; J.M. Luck, *A History of Switzerland*, (Palo Alto: Sposs, 1985), 446; Rueschemeyer *et al*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 87.

[129] Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 38-9.

[130] P. Loveday, A.W. Martin, and P. Weller, "New South Wales," in P. Loveday, A.W. Martin and R.S. Parker (eds.), *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1977), 190. As in Britain, Australian Labour first made inroads at the local level. See Ray Markey, "The Emergence of the Labour Party at the Municipal Level in NSW, 1891-1900," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 31:3 (1985), 408-17.

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because it appeared to have little effect on the results.[131] Yet PR would gain some staying power when it returned to Tasmania just a few years later along with surging support for a more radicalized Labour party.[132]

Conclusion

In the century-long struggles to remake western government to better respond to and further the interests of an emergent capitalism, voting system reforms arose amid taut struggles for power and influence. Far from representing an evolutionary step toward greater democracy or a political recognition of minority rights as set out in conventional

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[131] The proportional system adopted in Tasmania was the Single Transferable Vote (STV). Like party list PR it operated in multi-member constituencies but there the similarities ended. In STV, voters rank their choices 1, 2, 3, etc. and the winning candidates are those that achieved a set proportion, or quota, of the total vote. In a five member riding the quota would be approximately one-fifth of the total votes cast. STV is often characterized as a cumbersome and complicated version of PR, particularly to explain, and the manual counts could take days to complete. Thus in the absence of strong party competition (and by extension then support from parties and their supporters) reformers often faced strong criticisms about the length of the count and the complexity of the counting process. Though in fact STV is no more complicated than other PR system, its complexity is more transparent to voters (in party list systems voters tend only to see the results for parties, not the details of the quota allocations awarding them seats) and this would lead to countless repeal efforts in most of the places where it was eventually adopted. For a discussion of STV, how it works, and its varying public reception, see Hoag and Hallett, *Proportional Representation*; Enid Lakeman, *Power to Elect*, (London: Heineman, 1979); and Douglas J. Amy, *Real Choices, New Voices: The Case for Proportional Representation Elections in the United States*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

[132] P. Weller, "Tasmania," in P. Loveday *et al* (eds.), *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, 355-6. On the social reform element, see Stefan Petrow, "A new order of things: A.I. Clark and law reform in Tasmania 1887-1897," *Tasmanian Historical Research Association: Papers and Proceedings*, 47:4 (December 2000), 235-52. Labour's arrival did not spark any immediate discussion of voting system reform anywhere else either, even where they were strong electorally. Part of this can be attributed to the early achievement of responsible government and full male suffrage in the colony. This meant that working men had long voted and local elites competed for their support on issues dividing town and country, or involving a choice between protectionism and free trade. Though there was opposition to Labour and 'class' politics (as it was described at the time), and considerable efforts were made to polarize political debate around the 'labour' question, Labour's foes were divided and could not agree about what kind of threat this new approach to politics represented. However, when Labour began talking more about socialism, and sketched out more clearly its plans for government after the turn of the century, debates about voting system reform also emerged. In fact, putting Labour at a disadvantage was the prime motivation behind the re-introduction of PR in Tasmania in 1906. See Peter Loveday, "New South Wales," in D.J. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880-1920*, (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1975), 26-7; P. Loveday *et al*, "New South Wales," in Loveday *et al*, *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, 177, 198-9; 246-7; P. Weller, "Tasmania," 371.

accounts, the real story of voting system reform in the nineteenth century is one of pedantry, indifference, naivete, opportunism and fear. Reformers were often well-meaning but naive, and their largely pedantic efforts were marginal in the handful of adoptions that were accomplished. Long-standing minority concerns around religion, language, region and ethnicity produced no rush on the part of political elites to embrace proportional voting, despite repeated pleas to consider it. Political parties and powerful interest sometimes dabbled with minor voting system reforms, but shied away from them if they appeared to grant room for other, less savory political forces (like socialists and organized labour) to participate. In fact, though there were forces, particularly on the left, that argued that proportional voting systems were key to shifting to democratic government, the reform only really gained impetus from anti-democratic forces, and its introduction in the nineteenth century was mainly about frustrating moves toward even minimally democratic accountability.

By attending to the historical sequence of events leading to various voting system reforms we can see that the key catalyst shifting consideration of proportional voting from the earnest meeting rooms of reformers to the halls of power was the rise of disciplined, organized mass parties of the left in the 1890s. Throughout the mid-to-late nineteenth century the expansion of capitalist social relations was altering the class structures of western societies, giving rise to a new working class and working class organizations. Where distinctive left parties emerged, appearing strong and set to expand their influence, traditional political elites began to seriously consider voting system reforms. Though few judged the threat from the left worthy of such a drastic change of practice in the 1890s, a pattern clearly emerges from the historical record in Germany, Sweden, and Belgium. Where the left was strong, proportional voting reforms were readied for possible deployment; where the left was weak as in Italy, or divided as in

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France, or loyal to existing parties as in Britain, the voting system hardly mattered (though they occasionally might be manipulated for partisan gain where class factors were wholly absent from the political scene). But into the twentieth century, as the left continued to build on its organizational strength and threat to existing political elites, interest in voting system reform would also rise in seemingly proportional intensity.

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Chapter Three: European Voting System Reform 1900-1918

Introduction

The period from 1900 to 1920 witnessed the inauguration of modern democratic government throughout all western countries. It was also the single most dynamic era of voting system reform. In 1900, democracy was rare or deeply flawed in its operation. Few countries satisfied even the most minimal requirements - full male suffrage, responsible government, and free and fair elections. Countries like the Netherlands, Belgium, and Italy had responsible government but severely restricted the franchise. Others like Germany allowed full male suffrage but lacked responsible government. The United States, France and Switzerland had both broad male suffrage and a degree of 'responsible government' but their democratic credentials were marred by electoral corruption and inconsistent democratic practices. Britain operated very much as if it were democratic by 1900, though Britain's franchise and voter registration laws kept as many as a third of male - primarily working class - voters out, while the hereditary House of Lords acted as a brake on the elected House of Commons. Arguably Britain's colonies - Canada, Australia and New Zealand - best satisfied all three conditions, but they were not politically independent countries. Indeed, their 'democratic' decisions could be overturned by the British government or legally challenged in the British Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.[1] Similarly, Norway and Finland operated with a degree of local autonomy within larger imperial systems of power. Yet by 1920 all these

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[1] Nor is there much consensus as to when these dominions became independent countries in concrete terms, though World War I is generally recognized as a key break in the relationship with Britain. See W.J. Hudson and M.P. Sharp, *Australian Independence: Colony to Reluctant Kingdom*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), 3-4, 51-8; Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 280. New Zealand would stand apart, explicitly refusing moves toward greater independence until after World War II. For a more extenstive treatment of these countries and their unique 'dominion' status, see R. MacGregor Dawson, *The Development of Dominion Status*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937).

countries would satisfy the minimum conditions defining democratic rule. The process would involve intense social struggle, heightened political mobilization, and a myriad of institutional reforms.

The shift to democracy would be mirrored by a shift toward new proportional voting systems. The scale of voting system change across western countries between 1900 to 1920 was unprecedented. In 1900 nearly all used plurality or majority voting systems. Only Belgium stood out as a late convert to PR in literally the last days of 1899. Yet by 1920 all of continental Europe had switched to proportional or semi-proportional voting systems, leaving just the five English-speaking democracies using plurality or majority approaches. Even these English-speaking countries witnessed considerable agitation over voting systems in this period, leading to serious consideration of reform in Britain, and actual (albeit modest and sometimes temporary) reforms in New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. This distinct wave of voting system reform did not merely coincide with the struggle for democratic government - they were intimately related. As pressure mounted everywhere for greater government accountability to the emergent mass publics, voting systems specifically came under scrutiny, often playing a key role in struggles both for and against democracy.

The key factor animating consideration of voting system reforms throughout this period was the character and competitive position of left political parties. After 1900, support for working class political parties grew rapidly, restrained only by restrictive suffrage laws and lopsided, rurally-biased distributions of legislative seats. Increasing urbanization and industrialization across western countries in effect 'mobilized' people into more exclusively working class neighborhoods and workplaces, facilitating the rise of group identity, patterns of culture, and political organization. Working class parties organized and defended working class institutions like unions and self-help societies by

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facilitating mass electoral participation and introducing a more disciplined party behaviour into legislatures. Whether they were explicitly socialist or reformist, all left parties rallied public support behind demands for universal male suffrage and democratically accountable government, sometimes with support from liberal or farmer parties. And left parties were also the first to campaign for voting system reforms, specifically the introduction of proportional representation, both to ease their entry into legislatures and in the interests of broader democratic fairness.

Their opponents - traditional elites and bourgeois forces - responded to this mobilization with a mixture of repression, obfuscation, and partial reforms, particularly before World War I. But the anti-democratic forces were hardly united. They too became interested in proportional representation. Voting system reform emerged here as one response to this complicated struggle, sometimes aimed to divide the critics of conservative rule, or to facilitate liberal cooperation with subordinate working class parties, or to marginalize the left. In all this, the left's opponents were largely successful as democracy was still a rare form of government in 1914. But war, though it initially buttressed conservative politics, eventually undermined traditional rule and the resistance to democratic reform by further aiding the mobilization of working class demands. The emergence of 'total warfare' required substantial public and industrial commitment to the war effort, spawning overlapping networks of social organization through which political demands could be formed and articulated, eventually increasing the leverage of left parties, and strengthening organized labour. Combined with pervasive domestic and international instability at the war's end, all western countries were forced to concede at least minimally democratic rule between 1915 and 1920. Again, voting system reforms figured prominently in the struggle to resist, establish and limit democratic rule.

The next three chapters will set out the relationship between these democratic struggles and voting system reform, demonstrating how successive waves of mobilization involving economic restructuring, population migration and resettlement, the efforts of left political parties, and the socially integrative and destructive effects of war, all drove consideration of the issue by the left and right, contributing to the sweeping reforms of 1918-19. However, though both left and right called for voting system reforms at various times, the right were much more the decisive force in securing it, either to avoid democracy or to fashion a form of 'conservative insurance' within it. The left's role was more indirect. Where the left was strong and appeared to be getting stronger, voting system reform became attractive to the right. Where the left was weak, reforms were more modest, temporary or failed to make the political agenda. Only by tracing this historical sequence of the events can we sort out why voting system reform became a means of 'condensing' class forces in the institutions of the state in some places and not others, despite the common tension inherent in all these emergent forms of capitalist democracy. This dynamic will be sketched over the next three chapters, examining first pre-war and wartime Europe, then the same period for Anglo-American countries, and then shifting to the immediate postwar period and the 1920s.

Section I: Conservative resistance to democracy in Europe 1900-18

From 1900 to World War I voting system reform emerged across Europe to serve many purposes. In some locales it buttressed conservatives against calls for responsible government, or was designed to blunt the impact of the electoral left, or simply offered solace to the critics of the rising power of 'the party.' New voting systems were sought to divide the opponents of conservative rule in Finland and Sweden, stem the rise of the socialists in Germany and France, and limit the drift of democratizing pressures in

Norway, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands. In each case, the distinctive strategy and organization of working class parties was a important factor. While there had been political parties with considerable organizational capacities in the nineteenth century, particularly in the US and Britain, the scope of their activities paled in comparison to the new labour and socialist versions.[2] Left parties did not merely organize people to vote, they mobilized burgeoning urban populations into demonstrations, cultural and educational events, and the democratic processes of unions and the party itself. Out of the multiple experiences and demands of the new working class, they helped shape a distinct political identity and sense of purpose.[3] This contributed to a new discipline in electoral politics, both for voters and politicians. Increasingly left supporters would not give their support to non-left candidates, whether in run-off votes or multi-member ridings. And the discipline of left representatives in caucusing and voting as a bloc put less coordinated, cadre-style politicians on the defensive. These efforts eventually created a 'contagion from the left' that forced more conventional political players to respond.

The coming of war in 1914 initially appeared to buttress the political right and place severe constraints on the drive for democratic government. The left were quickly overwhelmed by the rise of popular support for war, dissent of all kinds was marginalized or criminalized, and the mounting pre-war pressures for more democracy gave way to a

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[2] Pugh, *The Tories and the People, 1880-1935*, 25-8; Walter Dean Burnham, "The United States: The Politics of Heterogeneity," in Richard Rose (ed.), *Electoral Behaviour: A Comparative Handbook*, (New York: The Free Press, 1974), 662-4, 667-8; Leon D. Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 104-6, 110-12.

[3] For example, extensive SPD social and cultural practices in Germany are recounted in Vernon L. Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); and Dick Geary, "Beer and Skittles? Workers and Culture in Early Twentieth-Century Germany," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 46:3 (2000), 388-402; while more general trends toward working class identity across Europe are explored in Dick Geary, "Working Class Identities in Europe, 1850s-1930s," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 45:1 (1999), 20-34.

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tacit public acceptance that strong government was needed to respond to the crisis.[4] Throughout Europe, formerly internationalist, anti-war socialists felt compelled to join the 'patriotic consensus' supporting the war effort, sometimes with promises of democratic reform later (as in Germany), but often simply to retain political credibility in the face of rising nationalist sentiment.[5] Needless to say, ongoing democratic reform projects like the negotiations for more proportional voting that were underway in France and Belgium, or plans to expand the franchise elsewhere, were quickly shelved. For conservatives, war offered - among other things - a way out of the seemingly uncontrollable spiral of strikes, demonstrations and unpalatable political results gaining ground across Europe from 1910 on. Even a short war - what most in fact were predicting - might help shift the balance of social and political power in their favour.

But 'the great war' turned out to be a conflagration like no other. The first modern, technologically sophisticated war to take place in what was now a densely-populated Europe inaugurated the twentieth century phenomenon of 'total war,' a condition that quickly began to undermine the authoritarian basis of conservative rule. War production gave rise to increasing levels of industrialization while the conditions of wartime facilitated the recognition of unions, bargaining rights and corporatist negotiations between workers, employers and government.[6] The need to make society-wide sacrifices to further the war effort required widespread controls and rationing, greatly expanding the scope of government, and fuelling the creation of elaborate networks throughout civil society to monitor these efforts and in turn channel new demands back to the state. The 'patriotic consensus' turned out to be a double-edged

[4] John Horne, "Remobilizing for 'total war': France and Britain, 1917-1918," in John Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 195-211.
[5] Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism,* 28-30.
[6] J. Cronin and P. Weller, "Working-Class Interests and the Politics of Social Democratic Reform in Britain, 1900-1940," *International Labor and Working-Class History,* 51; Eley, *Forging Democracy,* 134; Bernard Waites, *A Class Society at War: England 1914-1918,* (New York: Berg, 1987), 30-1.

sword, as those making the sacrifices came to expect a greater say in just how they were to be spread across society. More so than earlier efforts, war brought masses of people into an explicitly political realm, opening up questions for debate and resolution.[7] Rather quickly these links gave rise to more explicitly oppositional politics on both sides of the war, fuelling food protests in Berlin and rent strikes in Britain as early as 1915, and more generally across Europe by 1916.[8] The war that initially stifled dissent and democratic agitation would eventually spawn a more dynamic and thorough-going democratic agenda across Europe, one more threatening than traditional elites had thought possible, and one that would dramatically increase interest in voting system reforms.

These tensions can be readily observed in the most conservative countries in Europe between 1900 and 1918: Germany, Finland and Sweden. All three resisted pressures for parliamentary control of the government, utilizing divisions between liberal and socialist reformers to their advantage and instituting reforms like PR as means of maintaining those divisions.

Germany

German politics would prove influential to both the right and the left throughout Europe in the prewar period. On the right, Germany's stolid defence of conservative rule meant that even liberal reforms like 'responsible government'- never mind democracy - were viewed as radical and dangerous. Such intransigence towards political reform and unabashed celebration of conservative government from continental Europe's largest, arguably most powerful country heartened the nobility and traditional ruling classes from Moscow to Lisbon. For the right, Germany was proof that neither liberal reform nor

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[7] Hinton, "Voluntarism versus Jacobinism," 74-5; Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 124, 131.
[8] For Britain and Germany see Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 131. For Italy and France, see Giovanna Procacci, "Popular protest and labour conflict in Italy, 1915-18," *Social History*, 14:1 (January 1989), 31-58; and Philippe Bernard and Henri Dubief, *The Decline of the Third Republic, 1914-1938*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 48, 54, 71.

democracy were inevitable developments accompanying modernity. However, on the left Germany's large and socially powerful Social Democratic Party (SPD) established the pattern for left-wing organization and set the trends for political action across the continent. The SPD's unwavering commitment to socialism *and* democratic action steered the continent's left away from 'adventurism' toward engaged political action through working class organization and mobilization. Early on, the SPD committed to a host of democratic reforms, including proportional voting. Socialist programs in other European countries were often cribbed directly from the SPD. Thus what happened politically in Germany reverberated throughout Europe, repeating like echoes amongst different peoples and places.

Germany's approach to political representation was decisively shaped by the complications of state-building in the 1860s. As with Italy and France, Germany was put together by unifying many disparate territories. However, the German states were stronger, more developed and more independent than comparable territories were in France or Italy. They insisted on a federal system of government and were quick to defend their interests against perceived encroachments by the new federal power, particularly the most powerful and dominant state, Prussia.[9] As a counter-balance Bismark introduced a radical full male suffrage in 1871 as a means of creating a national constituency, while most states retained much more restrictive suffrages. He hoped that by opening political space to the masses, he could mobilize their support into his battle against the states to strengthen federal power, a battle that also pitted Bismarkian conservatives against liberals.[10] But from the 1870s on, German society would undergo

[9] Collier, *Paths Toward Democracy*, 101-3.

[10] However this point should not be overstressed. On the whole, Bismark's federal design still privileged state power, particularly Prussia, by making the national Reichstag dependent on the states' house, the Bundesrat, both to introduce and enforce legislation and taxes. Prussia's national influence was assured because it held a majority of seats in the Bundesrat. See Gerald Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labor in Germany 1914-1918*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 8-9. Bismark was also motivated to limit the political influence of liberals and Austria-Hungary in the new German state. See Guenther Roth,

profound economic and social change, and this newly opened political space would be used for very different purposes than Bismark intended.

The 1860s marked the take-off of the German economy, from a late developer in the early nineteenth century to arguably the most dynamic capitalist economy in the world by 1900. Economic growth decisively reshaped German society, spurring a dramatic population increase and a shift of that population from rural to urban locales.[11] The breakneck speed of German development, combined with an autocratic form of rule despite male suffrage, aided the rise of the first modern, mass socialist party.[12] The SPD organized the new urban masses politically, socially, culturally and economically. By 1878 Bismark found these developments so threatening that together with support from conservative and liberal forces in the Reichstag he banned socialist activities.[13] Socialist political and economic associations were suppressed, including the party's many newspapers, journals and printing presses, and any meetings, marches or celebrations

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The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany, (Totowa: Bedminster Press, 1968), 34-6; and for a more extensive treatment, Peter Steinbach, "Reichstag Elections in the Kaiserreich: The Prospects for Electoral Research in the Interdisciplinary Context," in Larry Eugene Jones and James Retallack (eds.), *Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany: New Perspectives*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 131-8. For a brief summary of some of Bismark's motives see Gerhard A. Ritter, "The Electoral Systems of Imperial Germany and their Consequences for Politics," in S. Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms s: Origins of Voting Systems in Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990), 53-4.

[11] Kitchen, *The Political Economy of Germany 1815-1914*, 122-6; W.L. Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1875-1933: From Ghetto to Government*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), 15, 22-4; Walter Kendall, *The Labour Movement in Europe*, (London: Allen Lane, 1975), 89-90; Dick Geary, "Socialism and the German Labour Before 1914," in Dick Geary (ed.), *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe Before 1914*, (New York: Berg, 1989), 102-5.

[12] Guttsman, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1875-1933*, 27-40.

[13] Germany's imperial parties were profoundly regional, having their roots in the quasi-independent states that preceded the formation of the Reich. For most of the imperial era (1871-1918) there were two main conservative parties (Deutsch-Konservative and Reichspartei), two main liberal parties (National Liberals and Progressives), a Catholic party (Centre party or Zentrum), the socialist SPD, and a smattering of regional or national minority parties (winning on average 10% of the vote and seats). Only the SPD operated as a national party running candidates in all ridings, while the other parties seldom fielded candidates in more than half the ridings. References to 'conservatives' or 'liberals' in the literature then actually refer to a number of parties, though it is conventional to refer to them under these more general labels, except in cases where disagreements exists amongst them on a particular issue (eg between the more right-of-centre National Liberals and more left-of-centre Progressives). See Ritter, "The Electoral Systems of Imperial Germany and their Consequences for Politics," 57-8.

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(though, curiously, the party could still run in elections).[14] But suppression did not work as socialists kept meeting surreptitiously under the guise of bowling clubs and singing groups. When the ban ended in 1890, the SPD emerged stronger than ever. With the failure of suppression, conservatives tried co-optation, introducing nascent welfare state reforms like social and health insurance, and systems of employment arbitration.[15] But reform measures did not wean working class voters from the socialist party either. Instead, socialists came to dominate the elections for insurance and arbitration boards. Critics soon complained that public boards had become the 'third prop' of socialist power after the party organization and the trade unions.[16]

The continued rise of the socialists by the turn of the century raised grave concerns amongst other political forces despite an apparently firm conservative control of the polity. Though blocked from taking power by the lack of responsible government, the SPD were arguably the most significant political force in the country, becoming the most popular party in the national house after 1890, and making headway in state and municipal elections despite more restrictive franchises. In analyzing the strength of the SPD's hold over working class voters, some contemporary observers blamed the voting system. This seemed curious in that, on the whole, Germany's traditional run-off form of majority voting had discriminated against the socialists.[17] Wherever the party failed to win a majority on the first ballot, they usually lost on the second for lack of allies amongst other parties. In 1903 the SPD won just 21 of 117 run-off contests in the

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[14] Mary Nolan, "Economic Crisis, State Policy, and Working Class Formation in Germany, 1870-1900," in Katznelson and Zolberg (eds.), *Working Class Formation: Nineteenth Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States*, 360.
[15] Roth, *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany*, 6-9.
[16] Ziegler, "PR in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany," 75.
[17] Typical continental majority voting in this period involved a two round or three round 'run-off' ballot. If no candidates gained an outright majority in the first round of voting then another round would be held at a later date. In some cases, the second ballot would be restricted to the two top vote-getters but in other cases all candidates could stand again.

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national election.[18] But where a working class party could win, the majority system tended to reinforce SPD hegemony on the left because they were clearly the dominant party. Most workers voting left - socialist or not - would support them or risk splitting the vote. German liberals and conservatives soon discovered that PR might be used to divide working class politics and cut into socialist support.[19] For conservatives, weakening the socialists might allow working class votes to be mobilized for other purposes, like the struggle between state and national power. For liberals, weakening the socialists offered the only hope of attaining some measure of responsible government.

From 1900 on, voting system reform was pursued in Germany for all representational bodies (labour arbitration, health insurance, municipal councils, state legislatures, even the national Reich) - wherever the left formed or threatened to form a majority. The first effort focused on the industrial courts. The German courts dealing with labour conflict originated in the period of Napoleonic rule. Employers financed them and held the majority of seats, workers with a prescribed income could vote, and local government sometimes intervened to act as a mediator. In 1845 Prussia authorized local councils to create labour courts, which was extended to the North German Federation in 1869. The strike wave of 1889 convinced traditional elites to strengthen the mediating function of labour courts, and in 1890 labour representation on industrial courts was increased to half, and secret voting was introduced.[20] However, as the SPD quickly came to dominate all the representation accorded to workers, their opponents began exploring electoral reform to limit their influence. Initially, these efforts arose at the local level. Though regulated by federal law, the industrial courts were under the

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[18] M. Niehuss, "Historiography, Sources and Methods of Electoral and Electoral Law Analysis in Germany - 1871-1987," in Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms: Origins of Voting Systems in Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 145.

[19] Stanley Suval, *Electoral Politics in Wilhelmine Germany*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 230-1.

[20] Steinmetz, "Workers and the Welfare State in Imperial Germany," 27.

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control of local authorities. In 1895 Frankfurt city council changed the voting system for their local industrial court from the traditional majority system to PR in an attempt to weaken the SPD monopoly over worker-designated seats. State courts quickly struck down the change as a violation of federal law but the incident brought the issue to federal attention. In 1901 the federal law was amended to allow any municipality the option of adopting PR for industrial court elections.[21] The fact that the new law was optional was important. It meant that where the socialists were weak, the traditional majority voting system could be maintained to discriminate against them, but where the socialists were strong, PR could be brought in to help fragment their support amongst weaker working class competitors.

The tactic worked so well that its application quickly spread wherever SPD representation approached a majority. When the Prussian government created special mining councils in 1904-5 they made the use of PR a mandatory provision in an explicit effort to limit the SPD.[22] Local and state governments also turned to PR as the sheer number of working class voters threatened to overwhelm traditional methods of limiting their influence like three class franchises and plural voting. For instance, Hamburg's lower chamber utilized a three-class franchise allocating 40 seats to traditional elites, 40 seats to property owners, and 80 seats to residents with a specified minimum taxed income. Between 1896 and 1904 the number of voters in the last category rose from 16,000 to 54,000, with 73% voting SPD. These trends, combined with the effects of majority voting, seemed destined to deliver all 80 lower tier seats - or half the council - to the SPD in the coming 1906 contest. To forestall this, Hamburg switched from majority to proportional voting for most of these seats, thus allowing SPD competitors to gain

[21] Ziegler, "PR in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany," 65-6.
[22] Ziegler, "PR in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany," 73.

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some representation at their expense.[23] Similar reforms were introduced in a number of states - Wurttemberg, Oldenburg, Lubceck, Bavaria, Baden - between 1906 and 1910, and applied to all municipal elections where population exceeded a prescribed amount, typically between 2000 to 4000 residents. Increasing urbanization meant that such laws led to sweeping changes. In Bavaria alone, 85 of the state's 115 municipalities exceeded the threshold and thus switched from majority voting to PR. In 1906 Wurttemberg also reformed the voting system used for elections to the state legislature, designating PR for use in urban areas like Stuttgart where the SPD was strong, and maintaining majority voting everywhere the SPD was weaker.[24]

Perhaps the most crippling use of voting system reform against the SPD involved the introduction of PR for elections to local social insurance boards in 1911. The introduction of mandatory, state-regulated social insurance in the 1880s had been a conservative strategy to undermine a key source of socialist power, the independent, socialist-controlled insurance funds.[25] But the plan backfired. Instead of weakening socialist influence, the SPD came to dominate these new state-sanctioned boards through the seats apportioned to workers. Given that the locals were funded one-third by the employers and two-thirds by the employees, and representation on the local boards followed suit, SPD representatives often held a majority, even if they did not win all the working class seats. The reforms of 1911 essentially ended SPD control in two ways: by reducing working class representation in social insurance boards from two-thirds to one-half, and by switching from majority to proportional voting, thus easing the entry of competitors for SPD voters. The higher-level appeal boards for local social insurance

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[23] Ziegler, "PR in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany," 77-9.
[24] Ziegler, "PR in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany," 81-7.
[25] Steinmetz, "Workers and the Welfare State in Imperial Germany," 24-5, 29.

cases witnessed even more blatant bias, with PR applying only to the election of the worker representatives.[26]

That PR was introduced in Germany before WWI primarily to thwart the left can be seen in the asymmetrical state responses to its advocates. Where coalitions of the centre-right wanted the reform it was readily introduced. But where the left or even a PR-specific coalition of the left and centre called for it, as they did in Alsace Lorraine in 1908 and Saxony in 1909, they were not successful.[27] The bias can also be seen in the different rules established for the use of PR in the SPD-dominated industrial courts and the more middle class mercantile courts. The latter were established in 1904 to help settle disputes between merchants and shopkeepers and their assistants and apprentices. For the industrial courts, PR was optional so that local city councils could introduce it to limit SPD gains where they were strong, or ignore it and let the majority system keep them weak. But for the mercantile courts, where the SPD had no real presence, the centre-right were prepared to make PR mandatory as a means of discouraging divisions from emerging within their own ranks.[28]

The opportunistic use of voting system reforms against the SPD in the pre-war era put the party in an awkward position. Though PR was clearly introduced to weaken them, the party would not condemn the reform, though they grumbled about the manner in which it was introduced or that it did not go far enough. This is because the socialists had been firmly committed to PR for decades. Party founder Wilhelm Liebknecht had advocated it as far back as 1849, and extensive positive discussion of the issue in the party journal *Die Zukunft* in the 1870s appeared to settle the question. By 1891, the demand for PR was article one in the party's Efurt program, alongside universal

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[26] Ziegler, "PR in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany," 73-6.
[27] Ziegler, "PR in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany," 87-8.
[28] Ziegler, "PR in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany," 70-1.

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suffrage.[29] The SPD then went on to capture the largest popular vote of any party in 1890, and more seats than any other party in 1912, results that often moved other left parties to waver in their support for PR.[30] But the SPD commitment to PR never wavered. Critics have since argued that the party's adherence to PR was a strategic blunder, especially in light of Weimar experience, and that if they had stuck with the majority system it would have eventually awarded them majority government.[31] Some suggest that the party's views were shaped by abstract notions of democratic justice, or a preference to 'count heads' of socialist supporters rather than struggle for government within the constraints of a bourgeois system.[32] But the SPD had very concrete reasons for sticking with PR. Apart from a general belief that PR was a more fair, democratic system, party activists and elites believed the majority voting system was rigged against them, as no parties would cooperate with them when a run-off ballot was required. Moreover, they were not content to wait until a working class majority formed in each constituency, despite believing that this would eventually come to pass, because they rejected constituency-based voting. Instead, socialists wanted to replace voting based on geographic areas with voting for 'communities of interest' that could be pooled across the nation as a whole. To stick with constituency voting would leave some SPD voters

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[29] Abraham Joseph Berlau, *The German Social Democratic Party 1914-1921*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), 44; Ziegler, "PR in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany," 56-61. There were a few dissenters, including Eduard Bernstein, who felt PR would inhibit party solidarity, but they had little influence in the party on this issue. See Preston Hastings, "Proportional Representation and the Weimar Constitution," 33.

[30] Though left parties across Europe remained committed to PR as an issue through most of the prewar period, the increasing success of left parties under plurality and majority rules did lead to debate within their ranks about the advisability of change. After WWI, a number of left parties broke with the PR consensus, most famously Sweden's SDP and Britain's Labour party.

[31] C. Hodge, "Three Ways to Lose a Republic: The Electoral Politics of the Weimar SPD," *European History Quarterly*, 17 (1987), 166-7.

[32] P. Pulzer, "Germany," in V. Bogdanor and D. Butler (eds.), *Democracy and Elections: Electoral Systems and their Political Consequences*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 85.

'orphaned' where the party was weak while PR would assure they too would be counted.[33]

The SPD aversion to constituency voting, and by extension their strong support for PR, was a direct result of the party's discriminatory treatment under the grossly unequal allocation of districts in imperial Germany. While the districts were somewhat equal in 1871, they remained unchanged throughout the imperial period despite dramatic increases in population and a shift of the majority of Germans from rural to urban locales. Over time, rural areas became dramatically over-represented, a fact that benefited the ruling conservatives.[34] As SPD support was primarily urban, the party was constantly under-represented. Thus despite dramatic increases in SPD support from the 1890s up to WWI, the party's parliamentary strength lagged behind. And the more popular the socialists became, the more conservatives refused to sanction any change to the district boundaries. However, this did not stop the SPD from agitating for changes. Again and again the party called for the introduction of PR for federal and state elections and, failing that, at least a boundary revision that would allocate more representatives to urban areas. The appeals fell mostly on deaf ears as the ruling conservatives knew that any changes would come at their expense and the centrist liberal forces feared the socialists much more than they wanted change. The socialists were so frustrated that even some of their most moderate members called for a general strike to gain suffrage and voting system reforms.[35]

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[33] Ziegler, "PR in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany," 57-8. Party support for PR went so far as to eschew justifications for adopting it, even in party newspapers, by reference to how it would simply benefit their party.
[34] Niehuss, "Historiography, Sources and Methods of Electoral and Electoral Law Analysis in Germany - 1871-1987," 143-4. The inequalities were quite striking. Constituency sizes in 1912 ranged from 10,700 voters in Schaumburg-Lippe to 338,900 in a suburb of Berlin. See Ritter, "The Electoral Systems of Imperial Germany and their Consequences for Politics," 60.
[35] S. Tegel, "Reformist Social Democrats, the Mass Strike and the Prussian Suffrage 1913," *European History Quarterly*, 17 (1987), 307-8.

Before WWI, voting system reforms in Germany were discussed by political activists from the right to the left. Though much fine talk referred to notions of justice, fairness and equality, reforms were only actually introduced when the centre-right wished to wrong-foot the socialists by splitting their vote. Whenever the left made an appeal for proportional voting, the request failed. However, things began to shift just before the start of WWI. In the election of 1912 the Social Democrats became the largest single party in the Reichstag. Unlike previous contests, part of their success came at the expense of a number of centre parties who now suffered under-representation for the first time and an overall decline in seats. It appeared that the SPD were approaching the point at which even the majority system would not limit their success.[36] At the same time, the cumulative effect of conservative economic, social and military policies began to move some centrist forces away from the status quo and toward considering an alliance with the SPD which, after all, had demonstrated its commitment to parliamentary and non-revolutionary politics.[37] Evidence of this new political flux could be seen when the 1913 SPD-sponsored bill to introduce PR for national elections failed by just one vote.[38] Though conservatives remained staunchly opposed to changing an electoral system that privileged their concentrated rural support, centre parties with urban support now

[36] Comparing results from the 1907 and 1912 Reichstag elections SPD support on the first round of majority voting increased from 73 to 144. Though the party lost a similar number of seats on the second round (30/34), their increase in outright victories on the first round in 1912 left the party with 110 seats, the most of any party. Meanwhile, first ballot support for the two liberal parties in terms of seats dropped by half between 1907 and 1912. Though both recovered to near their 1907 levels of representation by the second round, the trend was clear – declining first ballot support would eventually deliver more first ballot majorities to the SPD. Thus liberals began looking at PR to shore up their support. See Pulzer, "Germany," 87.
[37] Willem Verkade, *Democratic Parties in the Low Countries and Germany*, (Leiden: Universitaire Pers, 1965), 66-8. The 1912 election involved the most cooperation between socialist and liberal elites in terms of second ballot non-competition, though liberal voters proved more reticent than SPD supporters to follow the plan. See Carl E. Schorske, *German Social Democracy 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism*, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1955), 226-33; Gary P. Steenson, *"Not One Man! Not One Penny!" German Social Democracy, 1863-1914*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981), 53. On changing liberal views about the SPD and democracy see Bruce B. Frye, *Liberal Democracy in the Weimar Republic*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 31.
[38] Pulzer, "Germany," 88.

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believed that PR would serve them better than the majority voting system, especially as SPD support appeared on the rise. Unfortunately, the potential for an anti-conservative alliance was quickly dashed by the start of war.

The war effectively called to a halt the campaigns for democratic and voting system reform in Germany by narrowing the room for political disputes and party realignment. Hard decisions had to be taken from the outset of the conflict, commitments had to be made, and there was with little room for debate or reconsideration amid the fighting. For the left, the only organized social force that had been pressing for democratic and accountable government in Europe, commitment to the war effort meant supporting the status quo with promises of reform later. Germany's Chancellor in 1914 promised the SPD that after the war he would see through democratic reforms, specifically the elimination of Prussia's biased three-class state voting system.[39] The socialists ultimately fell in line, fearing political marginalization at the hands of a pro-war working class, though many members of the party grumbled that the promises would never be fulfilled.[40] Party unity started to break down in 1916 as members increasingly pressed the government on their democratic commitments, with some voting against the war budget in protest.[41] The Kaiser continued to promise that reforms would be forthcoming after the war, but as the strain of the war gave rise to social protest and demonstrations, the SPD and an increasing number of liberals began pressing for more

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[39] The bias in the Prussian system was the most extreme. In 1913 the SPD attained 30% of the popular vote in the state election, the most of any single party, but secured just 2.3% of the seats. See G. Ritter, "The Electoral Systems of Imperial Germany and their Consequences for Politics," 64.

[40] Susanne Miller and Heinrich Potthoff, *A History of Germany Social Democracy from 1848 to the Present*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 55-8; Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 3-4. Bessel presents a nuanced treatment of both working class and SPD support for the war beyond merely nationalist enthusiasm, arguing that their support was both more measured and limited in scope.

[41] Schorske, *German Social Democracy 1905-1917*, 307-12.

immediate changes. Meanwhile, conservatives and the military high command resisted all efforts at reform both publicly and behind the scenes.[42]

In March 1917 the SPD and various centre parties succeeded in establishing a constitutional reform committee. Sensing a shift in political support, both in the Reichstag and in the streets, Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg convinced the Kaiser to publicly support the immediate reform of the Prussian franchise. However, pressure from the military and Prussian political elites led the Kaiser to reverse his position. The committee deliberations did not fare much better. When the committee reported in July 1917 with a rather modest set of reforms including the use of PR in urban areas and an end to the Prussian three-class voting system, the Chancellor and the Kaiser initially agreed. But the military leadership threatened to resign and forced the dismissal of the Chancellor instead.[43] The new Chancellor shunted the committee report off for expert scrutiny and then, when it was approved, suppressed it altogether.[44] Despite promises of reform to come, conservatives doggedly resisted any attempts to democratize the national or Prussian governments. In fact, the only successful voting system reform of the period was the introduction of PR for war industry employee councils, a change specifically aimed to reduce SPD hegemony amongst workers.[45]

From the fall of 1917 the SPD began increasingly moving into a kind of unofficial opposition, while by early 1918 the political centre also began shifting away from the government's conservative power base.[46] The partial-PR plan was reconsidered in February 1918 and, despite strenuous conservative opposition at the committee stage in

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[42] P. Hastings, "Proportional Representation and the Weimar Constitution," 37-40.

[43] Wilhelm Deist, "The German army, the authoritarian nation-state and total war," in John Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 166-8; Robert B. Armeson, *Total Warfare and Compulsory Labor: A Study of the Military-Industrial-Complex in Germany during World War I*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 121-25.

[44] Hastings, "Proportional Representation and the Weimar Constitution," 45-53.

[45] Ziegler, "PR in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany," 89-90.

[46] Hastings, "Proportional Representation and the Weimar Constitution," 54-5.

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May, became law in July.[47] A great deal had changed in a year's time. German efforts to sue for peace had failed and the war seemed deadlocked despite the collapse of the Russian front. But a key factor shifting centre opinion in Germany was undoubtedly the Russian revolution and its influence in fuelling nationalist aspirations in Eastern Europe. For their part, German conservatives only embraced reform when it was clear the war was lost in August, but then only to better position themselves in negotiating with the Allies. The last imperial Chancellor tried to hurry along the reform process in October 1918, granting responsible government among other reforms, but it was too late.[48] As the war finally ground to halt, the traditional power system crumbled, replaced by a fragile declaration of a republic and near social chaos. At the sidelines the old political class were now united in calling for proportional representation.[49]

Finland

In 1906 Finland was the first country anywhere to adopt a fully proportional voting system. It seemed an unlikely innovator. Dominated by a local Swedish-speaking elite and a Russian imperial power, Finland was an overwhelmingly rural and agricultural country that up to that point had maintained the last feudal Estates-General in Europe.[50] Representation was restricted to the nobility, the clergy, burgesses and farmers, with only the wealthiest of the latter two groups allowed to vote. In 1900, the electorate comprised just 124,000 people out of a population of nearly three million.[51] Yet in one flurry of reform the country appeared to move from the middle ages to the modern age, from a

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[47] Ziegler, "PR in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany," 101-17.

[48] John W. Mishark, *The Road to Revolution: German Marxism and World War 1 - 1914-1919*, (Detroit: Moria Books, 1967), 163-71; Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labor in Germany 1914-1918*, 514.

[49] Ebert admitted later that the short-lived parliamentary regime of Prince Max had agreed to demands for PR before turning over power to the left, an indication of the rapidly shifting conservative views on the reform. See Berlau, *The German Social Democrats, 1914-1921*, 209; Hastings, "Proportional Representation and the Weimar Constitution," 66-8.

[50] R. Alpuro, *State and Revolution in Finland*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 90.

[51] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 111.

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narrow franchise to full male and female suffrage, from plurality voting to proportional representation. The impetus for these reforms was revolution. Though ultimately a failure, the Russian revolution of 1905 demonstrated convincingly the potential power of the masses, and its influence quickly spilled over into eastern Europe fuelling public demonstrations, revolutionary movements and reform initiatives throughout the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. Ten days after the outbreak of a general strike in St. Petersburg in October 1905 Finland was also facing a revolutionary situation, orchestrated largely by the Socialist party. Faced with revolt at home and abroad, the Russian imperial authorities capitulated to socialist demands for full suffrage and a unicameral legislature. PR was not a key demand but it emerged from the subsequent negotiations between divided local elites and imperial representatives.

The backdrop to the Finnish reforms involved a changing rural and urban class structure, an emergent cross-class nationalism, and an encroaching, centralizing imperial authority. Despite a seemingly rural and agricultural economy, the late nineteenth century witnessed Finland's integration into an emerging capitalist market for food and raw materials in Europe, an increasing proletarianization of the rural workforce, and the rise of rural manufacturing.[52] This is why Finland's Socialists would eventually make solid inroads into rural areas.[53] However, initially working class organization emerged in the late nineteenth century under cover of other activities - consumer cooperatives, sports, fire brigades. These efforts gained their greatest power in the temperance movement, oft described as the "political arm of the working class" after the successful political strikes for the abolition of drink and a slight opening of the suffrage in 1898.[54] A Socialist party was formed the following year.

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[52] Alpuro, *State and Revolution in Finland*, 48.

[53] David Kirby, "The Workers' Cause: Rank-and-File Attitudes and Opinions in the Finnish Social Democratic Party 1905-1918," *Past and Present*, 111 (May 1986), 135-7.

[54] Alpuro, *State and Revolution in Finland*, 109-10. However, the working class did not get the vote until after the revolution of 1905.

Opposition to working class organization was initially muted by elite support for Finnish nationalism and their hopes to mobilize workers behind a project of national independence when the time was right.[55] Nationalist sentiment had intensified from the 1890s on, fueled by the modernizing efforts of the Russian crown that led St. Petersburg to increasingly interfere in Finnish internal affairs. These efforts to streamline the empire and make the Russian imperial state more efficient came at the expense of Finnish elites accustomed to near-autonomy in internal government decision-making. As capitalist development further integrated economic activity between Finland and Russia, and the Russian empire and Europe, the question of who would exercise decisive political sovereignty over trade and state decisions could no longer be avoided.[56] Nascent workers associations and early unions were active participants in a series of nationalist demonstrations from 1899-1901and continued to support a 'nationalist movement of the working class' as they struggled to form their own country-wide organization before 1905.[57]

But with the outbreak of the 1905 Russian revolution bourgeois demands for nationalist autonomy were quickly outstripped by more far-reaching left demands for democracy and the fact that only the Socialists had the political organization and mobilizing capacities to turn opposition to imperial power into more than just talk.[58] As the Socialist-launched general strike proved an effective tool in challenging imperial authority, Finnish elites joined reluctantly, torn between nationalist aspirations and a

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[55] Osmo Jussila, "Nationalism and Revolution: Political dividing lines in the Grand Duchy of Finland during the last years of Russian rule," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 2 (1977), 291.

[56] Osmo Jussila, Seppo Hentila and Jukka Nevakivi, *From Grand Duchy to Modern State: A Political History of Finland since 1809*, (London: Hurst and Company, 1995), 63, 69-70; Tuomo Polvinen, *Imperial Borderland: Bobrikov and the Attempted Russification of Finland, 1898-1904*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) 67, 275; Alpuro, *State and Revolution in Finland*, 112-3.

[57] P. Haapala, "How was the Working Class Formed? The Case of Finland, 1850-1920," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 12:3 (1987), 193.

[58] Alpuro, *State and Revolution in Finland*, 115, 121.

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strong opposition to democracy.[59] For the first week of November the country ground to a halt, with effective power in the hands of local strike committees and the Socialists. They quickly adopted a 'Red Manifesto' demanding national rights and democracy. Faced with revolt throughout their empire, Russian imperial authorities and their local supporters in Finland quickly agreed to a number of longstanding demands, specifically full suffrage and the establishment of a unicameral legislature.[60] In the negotiations following the revolt PR also emerged for a number of reasons related to these divisions amongst traditional ruling elites.[61] For opponents of democracy, PR emerged as a fall-back position when it became clear that last-ditch efforts to restrict the franchise had failed. PR would also assure divisions amongst elites could be represented: the Swedish-speaking elite, rural and urban elites, etc.[62] But the imperial authorities also welcomed PR as a means of dividing the bourgeois forces amongst different parties, thus hoping to weaken their political independence project. In fact, imperial negotiators looked kindly on the rise of a left party for precisely this reason, clearly unaware of the organizational strength of the left.[63] As the left also supported the introduction of proportional voting, the change had the appearance of transcending political divisions.[64] But as it turned out, PR proved unnecessary as a bulwark against democracy because after the revolutionary

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[59] Jussila downplays the Socialist influence, suggesting the conventional elites were really just concerned about chaos and 'anarchy' and that even the left eschewed revolution at this time in favour of nationalism. However, he then proceeds to recount in detail elite concerns about left organizing in the period after the general strike and how this influenced elite decisions about political reform. See Jussila, "Nationalism and Revolution," 296, 307.

[60] Haapala, "How was the Working Class Formed? The Case of Finland, 1850-1920," 194.

[61] Demands typically included specific calls for universal suffrage and a single house legislature but made no mention of PR. See D.G. Kirby, *Finland and Russia 1808-1920, From Autonomy to Independence: A Selection of Documents*, (London: Macmillan, 1975), 104-17.

[62] Klaus Tornudd, *The Electoral System of Finland*, (London: Hugh Evelyn, 1968), 29-34; Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 113. Other guarantees against 'excessive democracy' included qualified majority rules that required two-thirds votes in the legislature and the double passage of a bill through successive legislatures. See Jussila et al, *From Grand Duchy to Modern State*, 81.

[63] Alpuro, *State and Revolution in Finland*, 113, 127; Jussila, "Nationalism and Revolution," 292. Local Finish elites were also surprised at the strength of the left, both in terms of mounting the general strike and their competitive position in the first electoral contest following the revolt.

[64] Tornudd, *The Electoral System of Finland*, 27, 29; Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 113.

tumult had passed, the Russian imperial authorities refused to cede much decision-making power to the new assembly. Neither democracy nor local autonomy made much headway in Finland before World War I.

Sweden

Just one year after the passage of Finland's ill-fated reforms in 1906, Sweden also adopted PR. Though in a general sense, the reasons were the same - to insulate conservative political hegemony from both the threat of liberal rivals and 'democracy' - the process and the social conditions fuelling the reform were very different. As an imperial power with sovereignty over Norway, Sweden had more in common with Russia than Finland. And like Finland's imperial master, Sweden maintained an oligarchic governing system with a highly restrictive franchise, one of the narrowest in Europe.[65] The constitutional settlement of 1866 had replaced a feudal four-estate system with a bicameral parliament, but essentially shifted power from traditional elites to a plutocracy, though the King still nominally 'ruled.' The commercial, bureaucratic and aristocratic elements of society dominated the upper house, while farm owners and some commercial interests controlled the lower house (urban over-representation limited farmer influence despite their numbers). Politics in the late nineteenth century centred around free trade versus protection, with various coalitions of commercial interests and farmers vying for power, depending on their position in the economy (e.g. domestic producers versus exporters). A high property and income franchise kept most Swedes from the polls for the lower house, while widespread plural voting by the wealthy depressed lower class

[65] Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 19-21. Between 1872 and 1896 the percentage of the total rural population that could vote in lower house elections shifted from 5.7 to 6.2 (or between 22 and 23.4% of men over 21). Urban percentages in the same period were 5.3 to 6.7 (or between 21.2 and 26.2% of men over 21). However, by 1908, the last election utilizing this suffrage, urban voter participation was increasing despite the barriers. The rural percent had increased to 8.5 (31.5% of men over 21) while the urban percent jumped to 12 (44.8% of men over 21).

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turnout for the upper house. Membership in the upper house was also limited by a number of factors: indirect voting, high property/income thresholds, and a lack of any remuneration for those elected.[66] By the 1880s demands for suffrage reform emerged, with a few candidates supporting the initiative gaining election to the lower house. By the 1890s, increasing industrialization had fuelled a rise in urban population and a new middle class – both factors that furthered calls for suffrage reform and new political organizing.[67] Reform forces led by political liberals and some socialists organized successful "people's parliaments" in 1893 and 1896 demanding more open suffrage and the Conservative government finally offered up some reforms that same year, the first since 1866.[68]

Voting system reform emerged out of the suffrage battle. By the 1890s the rising public agitation for political and social reform worried conservatives and farmers, moving some to suggest that the adoption of PR or some other majority-limiting reforms must accompany any suffrage extension as a kind of guarantee against what was assumed would be a working-class majority. The Conservative government even worked a measure of PR into its mild suffrage reform bill of 1896, applying it only in urban areas where conservative support was weakening and the rising liberal reform forces were already starting to face competition from the left. But the conservatives and farmers who dominated both houses of parliament were not prepared to alter the status quo and the government's initiative failed.[69] As neither faction could be sure whether the recent

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[66] Verney, *Parliamentary Reform in Sweden*, 88-90; Dankwart A. Rustow, *The Politics of Compromise: A Study of Parties and Cabinet Government in Sweden*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 23-4, 40.

[67] For a general overview of economic changes in this period see Ulf Olsson, "Sweden and Europe in the Twentieth Century: Economics and Politics, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 18: 1 (1993), 7-11. For their connection to political mobilization, see N. Elder, A. Thomas and D. Arter, *The Consensual Democracies: The Government and Politics of Scandinavian States*, (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982), 29-42.

[68] Rustow, *The Politics of Compromise*, 54-6, 59-60; Verney, *Parliamentary Reform in Sweden*, 110-11.

[69] Franklin D. Scott, *Sweden, The Nation's History*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 404; Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 37-8. Before the 1890s parliament was divided more along government/opposition lines than party lines, with shifting coalitions of

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political upheaval was permanent or temporary, they stuck with Sweden's traditional plurality voting system as the best means of limiting new political competition.

Meanwhile the reformers behind the "people's parliaments" faced internal divisions over strategy, with liberals arguing for a mass petition in favour of suffrage, and socialists supporting a general strike (a strategy that had gained political concessions recently in Belgium). Both approaches were eventually attempted and in different ways fuelled the rise of modern party organization.[70] The socialists had founded the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1889, very much influenced by the structure and program of the German SPD. But in 1898 the party deepened its organizational structure, making strong links with organized labour for increased membership, consistent financial support and coordinated action.[71] A Liberal party had been founded in 1894 but held the allegiance of few of the many independent parliamentarians elected in 1896. However, the organization and funds raised through the suffrage petition formed a jumping off point for a new Liberal party organization, and in 1900 a drive to attract independent MPs into a loose liberal caucus gained over 80 members in the lower house.[72] Social Democrats used their new organizational muscle to stage a country-wide general strike

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conservatives usually controlling the government. Without formal parties, discipline was weak. With the entry of reformist liberal forces, and eventually socialists, into the lower house in the 1890s the 'conservative' government absorbed most of its former opposition, whether they were farmers or more independent conservatives. Thus governments of conservatives and farmers after the electoral breakthrough for reformers in the 1890s can be identified somewhat accurately as Conservative, though a formal conservative party and party organization would not emerge for another decade. For discussions of the fluid nature of Sweden's party system c.1860-1890 and the emergence of more formal parties thereafter, see Stig Hadenius, *Swedish Politics in the Twentieth Century*, (Boras: Swedish Institute, 1985), 12-21; and Bo Sarlvik, "Sweden: The Social Bases of the Parties in a Developmental Perspective," in R. Rose (ed.), *Electoral Behaviour: A Comparative Handbook*, (New York: Free Press, 1974), 372-81.

[70] Herbert Tingsten, *The Swedish Social Democrats: Their Ideological Development*, (1941; Totowa: Bedminster Press, 1975), 374-7; Scott, *Sweden, the Nation's History*, 405; Verney, *Parliamentary Reform in Sweden*, 111-2; Rustow, *The Politics of Compromise*, 57.

[71] Gullan Gidlund, "From Popular Movement to Political Party: Development of the Social Democratic Labor Party Organization," in Klaus Misgeld, Karl Molin and Klas Amak (eds.), *Creating Social Democracy: A Century of the Social Democratic Labor Party in Sweden*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 101-8; Scott, *Sweden, the Nation's History*, 429-30, 434-5.

[72] Scott, *Sweden, the Nation's History*, 424; Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 39.

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for three days in 1902. This breakthrough in political organization by the opposition put suffrage back on the agenda. The next few years witnessed a flurry of competing reform proposals as both Liberals and Conservatives tried to out-manoeuvre one another.[73] In the process PR moved from a marginal to central issue.

Though a number of prominent Conservatives promoted PR at the turn of the century, they failed to convince all of the various conservative forces. When the Conservative government finally introduced its suffrage reform package in 1902 PR was not included. Liberals and Social Democrats were more receptive to PR initially, though the issue fell well below the expansion of the suffrage, their over-riding concern.[74] Yet in just two years political opinion on the question would reverse itself, with the Conservatives coming out strongly for PR, while the centre-left tried to organize public opinion against it. For Conservatives, the chief concern in the suffrage struggle was to effect change in such a way that different groups could be represented but not interfere with property, taxes, and economic decision-making by the state.[75] The 1866 bicameral settlement had accomplished this nicely. The combination of a plutocratic franchise and indirect elections typically assured a solid bloc of loosely-defined 'conservatives' - industrialists, bureaucrats, nobility - in the upper house. In the lower house, the slightly more open franchise allowed farmers and others to gain election, though urban over-representation gave these conservatives forces considerable representation there as well. Thus when it came to budget decisions, which required a joint vote of both houses, conservatives could effect much more political unity than anyone else and, as such, retained control of the purse. But these political distinctions were fluid, divided between government and opposition, defined by issues of protection versus free trade, more than

[73] Sheri Berman, *The Social Democratic Moment: Ideas and Politics in the Making of Interwar Europe*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 99-101.
[74] Leif Lewin, *Ideology and Strategy: A Century of Swedish Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 85; Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 41.
[75] Lewin, *Ideology and Strategy*, 60.

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party versus party. By the 1890s, a large group of farmers were often the key component of any Conservative government. The rise of coherent opposition in the lower house would erode this fluid yet practical conservative hegemony, and threaten a potential political stalemate between the two constitutionally equal houses.[76] Not surprisingly, the Conservative government's first serious proposal for suffrage reform in 1902 tried to reduce urban over-representation in the lower house, previously so effective in limiting a farmer-based opposition, while only modestly opening the franchise. But neither rank-and-file Conservatives nor Liberals liked the bill and it failed to pass either house.[77] This failure created an opening for PR advocates.

With the failure of the government's bill, a compromise plan was quickly put to the lower house calling for the extension of full male suffrage to be combined with the adoption of PR, which passed with both Conservative and Liberal support. Meanwhile, at the same time, long-time Conservative PR advocate Bishop Billing convinced the upper house to study the possibility of using PR for elections to the lower house.[78] Billings and many other Conservatives could see the effect that increasing industrialization was having on electoral outcomes as they increasingly lost seats to Liberals and Social Democrats.[79] In response to Billing's proposal, the Liberals later called for PR to be applied not just to the more popularly elected lower house but to both upper and lower chambers.[80] Thus all political forces entered the 1902 election advocating full male suffrage, though there was some disagreement about the nature of the 'guarantees' that would accompany it. The temporary consensus broke down a year

[76] Verney, *Parliamentary Reform in Sweden*, 134.
[77] Rustow, *The Politics of Compromise*, 62; Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 43-4. More rurally-based Conservatives and farmers supported the change while urban Conservatives opposed it. Liberals also opposed it as urban areas were their key source of support.
[78] Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 44.
[79] Lewin, *Ideology and Strategy*, 69-70. With the expansion of the urban economy, more and more workers were surpassing the franchise property and income limits. See also Eckelberry, "Swedish System of PR," 20.
[80] Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 42.

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later when the Conservative government's reform committee reported in favour of full suffrage and PR but for the second house only. Liberals and Social Democrats complained that the plan was designed to re-assert Conservative control over the political realm by turning the second house into an 'annex' of the first. Both declared they might still support PR but only for a single chamber parliament.[81]

The 1902 election proved to be a turning point in Liberal strategy. Though prominent Liberals, including then Liberal leader Sixten von Friesen, continued to declare public support for PR, subtle changes in the party's standing and organization moved the party in another direction. First, the 1902 contest improved Liberal standing in the lower house, moving them past the Conservatives as the largest coherent group in parliament. With the aid of the four Social Democrats and 20 independents, the Liberals could deny any Conservative coalition a majority and used their strength to gain control of nearly all committees.[82] As the Liberals began to see that they might soon form a majority in the lower house, their reform strategy shifted. Much influenced by developments in Britain, the Liberals decided to marginalize rather than reform the upper house, arguing for the parliamentary supremacy of the lower chamber.[83] Second, the Liberals had developed a permanent party organization to aid the 1902 election campaign. The party organization, realizing that the Social Democrats were increasingly their main competitors in the party's urban areas of strength, argued for the separation of the suffrage and PR issues. Liberals were divided on the question but a new leadership group justified the shift on tactical grounds. The new leader, Karl Staff, argued that because the Conservatives were using PR to prevent real reform, their proposal had to be defeated. Liberals were not against PR, he said, they were for suffrage. Yet at the same

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[81] Rustow, *The Politics of Compromise*, 61-2.
[82] Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 45-6.
[83] Verney, *Parliamentary Reform in Sweden*, 140-1, 145; Rustow, *The Politics of Compromise*, 63.

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time the Liberal party organization was researching arguments to discredit the use of PR.[84] For their part the Social Democrats remained committed to PR but opposed the Conservative proposals to introduce it in the existing bicameral parliament. As a result they opted to work with the Liberals to resist the introduction of PR between 1903 and 1907 but only because it did not apply to a single chamber house. SDP leader Branting repeatedly underlined through four separate campaigns that his party would support PR if used in a unicameral or lower chamber-dominated parliament.[85]

The Conservative government presented their combination suffrage/PR bill to parliament early in 1904. The Liberals responded by spending much of the spring organizing hundreds of anti-PR rallies to discredit the Conservative initiative and promote their own suffrage/plurality alternative. When both proposals finally came up for a vote in May the result was, not surprisingly, a stalemate between the Conservative-dominated upper house and the Liberal-controlled lower house. Now Liberal leaders and the Liberal party organization moved decisively against PR, shedding the ambiguity of their previous stand. They continued to organize public meetings to denounce PR. When the Conservatives tried to re-introduce their reform package in 1905 essentially unchanged, it failed again.[86] The 1905 election proved a decisive victory for the anti-PR forces as the Liberals and Social Democrats gained an outright majority in the lower house for the first time. Karl Staff was now asked to form the first non-Conservative ministry in Swedish history. He made achieving suffrage reform and gaining recognition for the parliamentary supremacy of the lower house his chief objectives.[87]

Staff and his Liberal party organization interpreted the election results, and the King's recognition of their victory in calling them to govern, as signs that Sweden was

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[84] Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 52, 57-8, 63.
[85] Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 47, 59, 90, 104.
[86] Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 57-62, 70.
[87] Rustow, *The Politics of Compromise*, 65-6.

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moving toward a British-style constitutional settlement where the lower house was supreme and an essentially two-party system acted as government and opposition. Certainly party lines were becoming clearer. In the 1905 contest the remnants of the disorganized farmers continued to lose ground while Conservatives benefited from the formal party organization they had set up in 1904. Parties and formal organization were becoming central to politics while the number of independents in parliaments dropped to its lowest level ever.[88] Staff moved quickly to introduce the Liberals' reform package in 1906, modified in a number of ways including the replacement of plurality with run-off majority voting.[89] When the upper house refused to pass it, Staff requested a dissolution from the king to force the issue to a public vote, one he felt confident he would win. Staff had two objectives: to win his reform package and establish the supremacy of the more broadly and directly-elected lower house. But Staff's strategy failed. The king refused to dissolve the house and when Staff resigned a new Conservative ministry took up his old suggestion to apply PR to both houses.[90] To his surprise, the 'double-PR' bill passed in 1907, primarily because a considerable number of his Liberals voted for it.[91]

The victory for PR in 1907 exposed deep rifts in the Liberal party and the still shifting nature of the party system. While Staff and his Liberal party organization focused on achieving an ideal British model of two-party competition and steady constitutional evolution, the real state of Swedish politics was more fluid. The backdrop to the period involving negotiations over and implementation of PR was a dynamic increase in labour organization and strikes, culminating in a crippling general strike in

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[88] Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 60-1, 74. Just 12 independents were elected.
[89] Verney, *Parliamentary Reform in Sweden*, 145. The Liberals now clearly saw the Social Democrats as their main competitive threat and shift from PR to majority voting as a means of limiting their impact and representation.
[90] Rustow, *The Politics of Compromise*, 68-70.
[91] Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 115.

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1909.[92] Sweden's rapid industrialization was dramatically altering the country's class structure, reducing the rural labour force and the economic importance of agriculture and increasing the urban ranks of the working class.[93] Liberals themselves were torn between an historic attachment to the struggle for the suffrage and a shared concern with conservatives about the rising power of organized labour and the SDP.[94] Throughout the reform period Liberals could not agree over what restrictions, if any, should be placed on full male suffrage. And suffrage was an issue that probably most unified Liberals; other policy areas produced little party discipline amongst members.[95] In the not-so-distant future, those Liberals that sided with the Conservatives on PR would appear more clear-sighted than Staff and most of the Liberal party organization. In the 1908 elections SDP support jumped from 13 to 34 seats, and by 1914 they had surpassed the Liberals.[96] As in Finland, the adoption of PR was designed to buttress Conservative rule and avoid the 'democratic avalanche' that full male suffrage implied. The democratic threat ultimately moved many Liberals to make common cause with Conservatives, despite their reform inclinations. Though Staff returned with a minority government in 1911, his power was hemmed in by an upper house still elected on a restricted franchise, a king who retained a sovereign's right to interfere in government, and divisions within his own party.[97]

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[92] Scott, Sweden, The Nation's History, 416; Ingvar Ansersson, A History of Sweden, (Stockholm: Natur Och Kultur, 1955), 407; Andrew A. Stromberg, A History of Sweden, (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 758-9.

[93] From the late 1890s Liberals relied on support from the urban middle classes, dissenting religions and some small farmers in the north and west. The shift in Sweden's class structure, then, undermined their support in urban areas as the working class voted more heavily for SDP candidates. Later the Liberals would be further weakened by middle class defections to the right in the face of labour militancy at the war's end. See Rueschemeyer et al, Capitalist Development and Democracy, 92-3.

[94] One measure of the SDP's success in mobilizing workers was the dramatic increase in party members - from about 6-7000 in the early 1890s to over 100,000 between 1906-8. See Tingsten, The Swedish Social Democrats, 373.

[95] Eckelberry, "The Swedish System of Proportional Representation," 77.

[96] Thomas T. Mackie and Richard Rose, The International Almanac of Electoral History, Second Edition, (New York: Facts on File, 1982), 336, 340.

[97] Scott, Sweden, the Nation's History, 428. In fact there were many in Conservative and royal circles who defended a more active intervention by the crown in political affairs. See Lewin, Ideology and Strategy, 93-6.

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'Democracy' would have to wait for the social upheaval flowing out of the coming world war.

The introduction of proportional representation in Finland and Sweden allowed conservatives to simultaneously deflect both Liberal demands for responsible government and socialist demands for democracy by exploiting key divisions in the reform coalition. Liberals had made tactical alliances with the left in both countries, to challenge Russian rule in Finland and conservative intransigence over suffrage in Sweden, but it was always an uneasy alliance, especially as left parties became organizationally stronger and more militant. Conservatives skillfully exploited these fears, shifting the direction of reform toward PR and away from threats to their continued rule. Thus in these Scandinavian countries PR allowed the right to defeat or contain both the centre and the left. But the balance of political forces was not the same in all conservative-dominated regimes. In Germany, the conditions of conservative rule in this period were much more secure. The existence of full-male suffrage and the world's most successful left party dampened bourgeois enthusiasm for responsible government and limited the space for centre-left reform alliances against conservative rule. Instead, the centre and right were frank that their objective with electoral reforms like plural voting, three-class suffrages and proportional representation was to limit or suppress the left.

Section II: Negotiating the limits of democracy in Europe 1900-18

The adoption of PR in Finland, Sweden and Germany (at the sub-national level) helped conservative regimes resist both liberal demands for parliamentary control of government and the more radical left demand for democracy. Elsewhere in Europe - in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Belgium - conservative hegemony had given way to various power-sharing arrangements between liberals and conservatives by the late

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nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that initially blunted the strategic threat from the left (though this began to give way in the years just prior to WWI). Meanwhile, in the countries of southern and eastern Europe the left proved too weak to exact much reform before WWI and these countries remained essentially elite-governed. Where some degree of mass suffrage and responsible government did exist, the question of voting system reform did emerge in the pre-war era but took a very different turn than in the conservative regimes. In Norway, France, Switzerland and the Anglo-American countries, the emergence of a mass franchise and a kind of 'responsible government' was gradual, tentative, and backed up by many avenues of conservative retreat lest things become too 'democratic' for the powerful. Nevertheless, the left organized and made their presence felt on the political scene to the extent that conventional politicians worried about their impact. In these cases, voting system reform was informed by the relationship between left parties and their nearest competitor. Unlike the conservative regimes, dominant parties in a competitive political system were not interested in PR, as that would only increase the leverage of left parties and possibly end the practice of single party majority government. Many assumed that left party efforts were temporary and could be eventually absorbed into the existing parties. Instead, the party most affected by competition from the left paid particular attention to majority voting systems as means to both tactically ally with them while at the same time hopefully marginalize them. Again, the strength of the left was a key factor in just how far these reform efforts developed.

Switzerland and Norway

The impact of the left could take many forms. In Switzerland left influence at the cantonal level was magnified by the existence of other divisions like religion, language and the need for some degree of local unity in the struggle against what was seen as

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encroaching federal power. In a number of cantons PR became a means toward elite

unity in the face of challenges from both the left and those supporting a stronger national

government. Nine of Switzerland's twenty-two cantons had adopted PR by 1914. But

the political balance at the federal level did not create the same tension, and agitation by

Socialists for proportional voting was hindered by their weakness and isolation. Initiative

referendums aimed at securing PR for national elections failed in 1900 and 1910, though

support increased each time.[98] Yet conditions were changing rapidly in the years before

WWI and in 1913 a Socialist-led coalition again gained enough signatures to hold another

referendum on the issue. Only the outbreak of war allowed the government to put off the

vote.[99]

In Norway the left was stronger but the pressure for national unity to wrest

independence from Sweden meant that, as in Finland, bourgeois parties were initially

willing to tolerate them as political allies. Male voting rights had expanded slowly in the

nineteenth century culminating in universal manhood suffrage by 1897 (though voting

would remain indirect until 1905).[100] At the same time, a kind of local autonomy, again

similar to Finland's relationship to Russia, allowed local elites to run the country

internally. But just as in the east, Norway's integration into the worldwide capitalist

economy, particularly in terms of shipping, increasingly brought it into political conflict

with its Swedish imperial master. A nationalist coalition came to power in 1884, giving

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[98] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 139-41. Though the 1910 referendum was close, with a majority of cantons and 48% of voters in favour (12 to 10). For a general overview of these efforts, see Lutz, "Switzerland: Introducing Proportional Representation from Below," 284-7.

[99] Lutz, "Switzerland: Introducing Proportional Representation from Below," 286.

[100] Between 1829 and 1882 the percentage of population eligible to vote expanded little, from 5.6% to 7.6%. However, a Liberal administration won an outright majority of both seats and votes in every election but one between 1882 and 1903. Keen to further its nationalist cause against Swedish imperial power, and confident in its majority support, the Liberals slowly expanded the franchise, to 9.4% of the population by 1885 and 19.7% by 1900. Yet they retained indirect forms of election where the 'primary' or eligible voters would elect 'secondary' voters who would choose the actual representatives. Indirect voting was another institutional mechanism to control the electoral process and assure only 'respectable' members of society would gain election. See Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe*, 90.

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rise to an early party system divided between independence-oriented Liberals and somewhat pro-Swedish Conservatives. In the period up to 1900 the Liberals pulled together a broad majority coalition in favour of independence, including peasants and workers.[101] By the time a vote on the question was extracted from the Swedish government in 1905, the majority had become a national consensus - 368,208 voted for independence while just 184 voted against.[102] But just as the left-liberal national coalition approached victory it began to break down. The Labour party elected its first member to the Storting in 1903, pushing Liberals to form an anti-socialist coalition with Conservatives between 1903 and 1905.[103] Independence brought further pressure for reform, including an end to indirect voting that had benefited Conservatives. Indirect voting allowed intermediaries to influence the choice of representatives, a process that worked against Labour. Unsure as to how much direct elections would benefit or hurt them, the government replaced plurality with majority voting to limit the impact of vote-splitting from the left and any vote shifts resulting from the end of the nationalist consensus.[104]

France

Unlike conservative regimes, where voting system reforms acted as a last anti-democratic rally, Switzerland and Norway anticipated the major trends to come. In the near future, countries would either see intractable elite divisions make PR the best response to a rising left, as in most of northern Europe, or fairly confident major parties

[101] A. Seip, "Nation-building Within the Union: Politics, Class and Culture in the Norwegian Nation-State in the Nineteenth Century," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 20:1 (1994), 48.
[102] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe*, 88.
[103] A. Seip, "Nation-building Within the Union," 49.
[104] Jostein Ryssevik, "Parties vs. Parliament: Contrasting Configurations of Electoral and Ministerial Socialism in Scandinavia," in Lauri Karvonen and Jan Sundberg (eds.), *Social Democracy in Transition: Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe*, (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1991), 32; Donald R. Matthews and Henry Valen, *Parliamentary Representation: The Case of the Norwegian Storting*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 34, 37.

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try to use plurality or majority voting to stymie political labour, as in Anglo-American countries. The major exception was France. While in most locales voting system reform was an unusual and episodic event, the French seemed always willing to consider something new. From 1871 to 1990 there were no less than 16 attempts to change the voting system, with at least one campaign mounted between every election between 1909 and 1932 and 1945 and 1958.[105] In the nineteenth century, reform had centred on the choice between plurality versus majority voting, and single versus multi-member constituencies. The key divisions in the late nineteenth century involved religion and the state, with political competition evenly divided between a Monarchist right and Republican centre-left. As each group came to power they experimented with different voting systems and constituency arrangements as a means of entrenching themselves in power. But most of these initiatives backfired, usually aiding their opponents. The fluid nature of electoral institutions reflected the instability of the Republican regime, with conservatives keen to topple it, and left-liberal forces determined that it survive.[106] Electoral system manipulation stood alongside widespread electoral corruption as the favoured means of institutional political struggle.

By the turn of the century increasing industrialization and repressive government responses to labour contributed to a shift in electoral alliances, fuelling left politics that would break out of the republican orbit, while moving liberals and conservatives to more explicit anti-socialist-inspired cooperation, ultimately forcing the latter to abandon their objections to the regime.[107] In some ways all that changed were the names of the political

[105] These calculations are drawn from Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections*, and Cole and Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections Since 1789*, and include only attempts to change between majority and proportional voting systems. If efforts to shift from single member to multi-member constituency systems are included the figure rises to 22.

[106] D. Hanley, "France: Living with Instability," in D. Broughton and M. Donovan (eds.), *Changing Party Systems in Western Europe*, (London: Pinter, 1999), 48-9; Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Election*, 23.

[107] John Horne, "The State and the Challenge of Labour in France 1917-20," in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *Challenges of Labour: Central and Western Europe 1917-20*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 239-40; Roger

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forces. The late nineteenth century republic had witnessed the Republicans marry left-liberal concerns for a kind of quasi-democratic government (even if it was corrupt and uneven in practice) with conservative concerns for fiscal prudence. But the rise of socialist organizations forced these deals out into the open.[108] Into the twentieth century the party system shifted, breaking down along four broad lines: socialists on the left, reformist radicals on the centre-left, economic liberals or 'moderates' on the centre-right, and religious and monarchist supporters on the right.[109] The emergence of an electorally competitive socialist party (SFIO) in 1905 altered the dynamic of the political system, pushing the Radicals to the left. As the party began to benefit from the transfer of socialist voting support on the second ballot of France's majority voting system, Radical ministries responded with some tentative social reform legislation. The right, on the other hand, were hard pressed to respond to this new alliance and spent much of the pre-war period searching for an effective alternative that might produce a majority.[110]

Not surprisingly, interest in voting system reform after the turn of the century shifted as well, from a debate between plurality or majority, to one defending majority or calling for PR. The Radicals preferred the majority system as it allowed the party to

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Magraw, "Socialism, Syndicalism and French Labour Before 1914," in Dick Geary (ed.), *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe Before 1914*, (New York: Berg, 1989), 50-1.

[108] The change can be seen with the steep increase in the number of constituency contests going on to a second ballot beginning in the 1890s. See Cole and Campbell, *French Electoral Systems*, 71.

[109] The character of the pre-WWI party system in France is complex and confusing, hindered by a lack of consensus amongst experts about how terms like 'left' and 'right' should be used and whom they should apply to. Scholars consistently apply 'left' to republican forces and 'right' to monarchist forces when dealing with the latter third of the nineteenth century but differ widely in incorporating the socialists after 1900. There is also confusion about the proper names for some parties - the Radicals are sometimes referred to as Radical Socialists, even though everyone seems to agree that the party was not socialistic in outlook. This is further confused by the shifting allegiances of many high profile politicians of the period - Clemenceau, Briand, Millerand - who had roots on the left but ended up on the right. For some of the different treatments, see Gordon Wright, *Raymond Poincare and the French Presidency*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1967), 21; Rene Remond, *The Right Wing in France: From 1815 to de Gaulle*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966); Francis De Tarr, *The French Radical Party: From Herriot to Mendes-France*, (London: Oxford, 1961), xviii-xix; J.F.V. Keiger, *Raymond Poincare*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). The problem is discussed in Roy Pierce, "French Legislative Elections: The Historical Background," in Howard R. Penniman (ed.), *The French National Assembly Elections of 1978*, (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1980), 2-6.

[110] Malcolm Anderson, *Conservative Politics in France*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974), 38.

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broker election deals with Socialists, Moderates and even Conservatives, depending on the constituency. As the centre party, the Radicals were well placed to exploit their strategic position gaining left support on anti-clerical issues and right support for economic concerns.[111] But Radicals proved to be unreliable allies, often opportunistically attacking those who had supported them.[112] As with their nineteenth century Republican party forbears, the Radicals talked left but governed right in terms of fiscal policy and responses to industrial disputes. But their attacks on the church also offended the right. Both Socialists and Conservatives deplored the 'immoral bargains' fostered by the run-off elections and promoted PR to end them, occasionally forming tactical electoral coalitions against the radicals to further this.[113] Moderates also sought reform to limit the local influence in politics and strengthen parties, hoping to contribute to more disciplined behaviour in parliament.[114]

The fall of Clemenceau's Radical-dominated coalition opened some space for centre-right Moderates to try to reorient the political centre away from a Radical-Socialist axis and toward a Radical-Moderate basis, a strategy that would marginalize both the Socialist left and the religious right. Particularly after the 1910 election, a contest that appeared to reinforce centrist opinion, former leftist Briand and Moderate elder statesman

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[111] D. Goldey and P. Williams, "France," in V. Bogdanor and D. Butler (eds.), *Democracy and Elections: Electoral Systems and their Political Consequences*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 65; Hanley, "France: Living with Instability," 54. However, given the fluidity of the party system, there were a few Radicals in favour of reform as well.

[112] For instance, several Radical ministries before the war introduced some progressive legislation in terms of unions and social program but they were also extremely heavy-handed in their response to strikes and demonstrations, regularly using troops and firing on strikers. See James F. McMillan, *Twentieth Century France: Politics and Society 1898-1991*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), 18-9; Robert J. Young, *Power and Pleasure: Louis Barthou and the Third French Republic*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 93. For a survey of Republican and Radical progressive legislation and some of its shortcomings, see Roger Macgraw, "Socialism, Syndicalism and French Labour Before 1914," 48-100.

[113] Goldey and Williams, "France," 68-9.

[114] This demonstrates the overlap with and remaking of the old nineteenth century republican/monarchist split as electoral reform was long a republican issue (though focused on districting more than voting formula) to force politics away from local concerns and toward more disciplined parties. However, in this case the Moderates could be considered both republican and right-wing. See David Robin Watson, *Georges Clemenceau: A Political Biography*, (Plymouth: Eyre Methuen, 1974), 78; and Roy Pierce, "French Legislative Elections: The Historical Background," 9-10.

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Poincare made voting system reform a key part of their centre-right strategy between 1909 and 1913.[115] Briand had first raised the issue as part of the Radical government in 1909, convincing quite a number of Radicals to support the change before opponents within the party killed the initiative.[116] The 1910 election returned a majority committed to some kind of electoral reform. When Moderate leader Poincare became Prime Minister in 1912 he successfully steered passage of PR through the lower house, only to see it voted down by the Radical-dominated Senate.[117] Another majority for voting system reform was elected in 1914 but war precluded any action on the issue.[118] Radical indifference and rural Conservative opposition to reform were the key barriers. More urban Conservatives thought PR an urgent necessity to limit the rise of the Socialists but their centrist and rural allies remained unconvinced. The weakness of the left electorally and organizationally also fueled this indifference. And unlike the rest of western Europe, the potential shift to a predominantly urban, working class majority in France was also limited by the continuing viability of an economically-independent rural peasantry, still amounting to 46% of the workforce as late as 1906.[119]

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[115] McMillan, *Twentieth Century France*, 37-8; Keiger, *Raymond Poincaire*, 119.

[116] *Equity Series*, "PR Review," 12:2 April 1910, 73-4; Benjamin F. Martin, *France and the Apres Guerre 1918-1924*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 61.

[117] Keiger, *Raymond Poincare*, 121, 127-8, 131; Wright, *Raymond Poincare and the French Presidency*, 26, 73-4; Watson, *Georges Clemenceau: A Political Biography*, 243-6; Young, *Power and Pleasure*, 113.

[118] Campbell, "French Electoral Systems and Elections," 86, 89-91; Wright, *Raymond Poincare and the French Presidency*, 112.

[119] Hanley, "France: Living with Instability," 49-50. Macgraw reports that over 60% of the population could be considered 'rural' in 1914, though some of these were workers in rural industry. Susan Milner notes that even when workers had urban jobs they still had strong roots in rural areas and shifted between the two, a trend that only tapered off after World War II. She suggests this may have had important implications for working class collective action. See Macgraw, "Socialism, Syndicalism and French Labour Before 1914," 49; and Susan Milner, "France," in Stefan Berger and David Broughton (eds.), *The Force of Labour: The Western European Labour Movement and the Working Class in the Twentieth Century*, (Oxford: Berg, 1995), 215-6. However, having said all this, Socialists did have some support with the French peasantry. See McMillan, *Twentieth Century France*, 26-7.

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Denmark

Like the rest of Europe, Denmark and the Netherlands had witnessed a rapid process of industrialization and urbanization since the turn of the century, giving rise to significant left parties and increased political competition. But when WWI began, unlike the countries at war, the left in these countries did not have to renounce their internationalism or their agitation for more democracy.[120] For reasons particular to the cleavage structures in each country, wartime-inspired social and political instability fuelled elite fears of the left and their superior organization, speeding the pace of domestic democratic reforms, including negotiations over proportional voting.[121] The pressures of war did not fall only on the combatants. Neutral countries like Denmark and the Netherlands were caught between the belligerents and faced economic ruin as war cut them off from their trade routes and trade partners.[122] These conditions only intensified the political divisions that had emerged before the war and heightened centre-right fears about an expanding left.

The first wartime voting system reform came with the adoption of a semi-proportional hybrid system in Denmark in 1915. The Danes had been early innovators, briefly entertaining full male suffrage (though with 'open' balloting), essentially responsible government, and proportional representation between 1849 and 1866. The

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[120] Abendroth, *Short History of the European Working Class*, 64.

[121] The experiences of Denmark and the Netherlands can be fruitfully compared to the remaining neutral country on the European continent - Switzerland. Though the war undermined social and political stability there too, and the Swiss left undeniably benefited from the situation, the conditions did not result in voting system reform during wartime. A crucial difference, aside from the weakness of the Swiss left as compared to other major European countries, was the weakness of the federal government. The rise of the left in unitary states like Denmark and the Netherlands was more threatening than in decentralized federations like Switzerland. See Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Europe*, 32.

[122] Carsten Due-Nielsen, "Denmark and the First World War," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 10:1 (1985), 10; Erik Hansen, "Between Reform and Revolution: Social Democracy and Dutch Society, 1917-21," in Hans A. Schmitt (ed.), *Neutral Europe between War and Revolution 1917-23*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988), 183-4. Economic conditions remained fairly normal in neutral countries for the first two years of the war but deteriorated rapidly from 1916 on as British naval blockades and German submarine warfare disrupted trade and shipping.

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devastating military loss to Germany in 1864, however, resulting in a loss of forty percent of Danish territory, led to a reassertion of conservative control over government, though male suffrage with some restrictions was retained for the lower house.[123] Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century Danish farmers struggled against Conservative rule, aided near the end by an emerging urban-based labour movement and its socialist party (SDP).[124] In 1901 the crown and the Conservatives relented, granting responsible government to the lower house but keeping the upper house as a preserve of Conservative influence and legislative delay.[125] The fairly rapid marriage of responsible government and nearly full male suffrage in Denmark was surprising, especially when compared to the rest of Europe, but in many ways it was encouraged by the geographic breakdown of political competition. Unlike the rest of Scandinavia, Danish farming consisted of tightly knit networks of small family farms, with little in the way of a rural proletariat that might respond to labour or socialist appeals.[126] Danish farmers also tended to support the Liberal party as they relied on free trade to export to Britain and across Europe and had spent considerable energy fighting for the political power to protect it. The absence of the kind of rural socialist organizing present in Norway, Sweden and Finland, combined with their liberal sentiments toward responsible government and the franchise, meant that

[123] Kenneth Miller, *Government and Politics in Denmark*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), 34; O. Borre, "The Social Bases of Danish Electoral Behaviour," in R. Rose (ed.), *Electoral Participation: A Comparative Analysis*, (London: Sage, 1980), 242; L. Johansen, "Denmark," in G. Hand, J. Georgel and C. Sasse (eds.), *European Electoral Systems Handbook*, (London: Butterworths, 1979), 30. In qualifying Denmark's full male suffrage, Johansen notes that reforms in 1915 had the effect of trebling the vote for the lower house, an increase that cannot be explained solely by the extension of the vote to women.

[124] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 77-8; Miller, *Government and Politics in Denmark*, 35. However, though the SDP emerged in 1871, and elected two members to the lower house in 1884, their representation remained limited until the next century. Borre points out that initially the rise of left moved the Liberals to seek an accommodation with conservatives. Only when they were rebuffed did they work more closely with the early socialists. See Borre, "The Social Bases of Danish Electoral Behaviour," 243.

[125] Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets*, 152; Borre, "The Social Bases of Danish Electoral Behaviour," 243; G. De Faramond, "The Nordic Countries: A Type of Democratic Spirit," in A. de Baecque (ed.), *A History of Democracy in Europe*, (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 1995), 198. De Faramond suggests an agricultural crisis and serious labour agitation contributed to the dramatic Liberal-Left victory at the polls in 1901.

[126] Elder *et al*, *The Consensual Democracies? The Government and Politics of the Scandinavian States*, 37.

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Denmark's farmers were less concerned about the rise of an urban left.[127] However, conditions changed rapidly in the new century, with the more urban Liberals facing strong competition from the left SDP. By 1905, a breakaway faction of the Liberals, the Radical party, made an electoral pact with the left, one component of which involved seeking far-reaching electoral reforms.[128]

The fracturing of the Liberal party along urban/rural lines created an opening for voting reforms by destabilizing the party system.[129] Competition from the SDP had pushed the more urban members of the party toward reform liberalism, translating into support for social issues and a strong opposition to imperialism and Danish re-armament.[130] This eventually fuelled their formation of a new party. But competition from the dominant Liberal party and Conservatives forced them into an electoral pact with the left.[131] Though somewhat effective, neither the SDP nor the minority Liberals were pleased with the arrangement and as such both sought electoral reforms as a way out. The Conservatives were also interested in reform, driven by concerns about the strength of the left and the manner in which the plurality system was eroding their support in the lower house. Perhaps recognizing that they could not hold their privileged position in the upper house indefinitely, and fearing being pushed out of the lower house altogether, the Conservatives were desperate for some form of proportional representation.[132] Not surprisingly, the majority Liberals, over-represented by the

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[127] Elder *et al, The Consensual Democracies?*, 42.
[128] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems of Western Europe*, 78.
[129] Miller, *Government and Politics in Denmark*, 36.
[130] Elder *et al, The Consensual Democracies?*, 50; Ben A. Arneson, *The Democratic Monarchies of Scandinavia*, (New York: D. Van Nonstrand Company, 1949), 54-5; Gosta Esping-Andersen, *Politics Against Markets: The Social Democratic Road to Power*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 74.
[131] Kenneth E. Miller, *Friends and Rivals: Coalition Politics in Denmark, 1901-1995*, (New York: University Press of America, 1996), 4.
[132] J. Elkit, "The Best of Both Worlds? The Danish Electoral System 1915-20 in a Comparative Perspective," *Electoral Studies*, 11:3 (1992), 190-1; John Fitzmaurice, *Politics in Denmark*, (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1981), 17.

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plurality system and usually in power, were uninterested in reform.[133] But when the 1909 election did not produce a majority for any party, allowing the Radicals to form a brief minority government with support from the SDP, the opening sparked inter-party negotiations over several electoral reforms. However, it was only when the same 'progressive' coalition won a majority government in 1913, with the Social Democrats gaining more popular support than the other parties for the first time, that negotiations became more serious.[134]

The problem with reform stemmed from a lack of consensus about just what needed reforming most urgently. The Liberals wanted to reform the franchise and constitutional status of the upper house but opposed the introduction of PR as a threat to their dominance in the lower house. The Social Democrats sought redress of the bias in favour of rural representation and called for a redistribution of riding boundaries, as well as reforms to the upper house. They were somewhat indifferent to PR, recognizing that their increasing strength would now see plurality's distorting effects work in their favour. The Conservatives focused on PR as means to better their representation and limit the SDP, but they also wanted to resist reform of the upper house where indirect voting and a more exclusive franchise allowed them to dominate.[135] Negotiations over reform in the past had stumbled on just this triangular impasse.[136] But developments from 1910 to 1913, particularly the rise in labour militancy, the electoral success of the SDP, and efforts to remake of the Liberal coalition, started to shift the reform ground. Though SDP support hovered around 30% by WWI, national figures tended to understate its threat to other parties. Specifically in urban areas like Copenhagen, SDP support in the 1913

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[133] L. Johansen, "Denmark," 31.
[134] Niels Finn Christiansen, "Reformism within Danish Social Democracy until the Nineteen-Thirties," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 3 (1978), 298; Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 79; Collier, *Paths Toward Democracy*, 82; Miller, *Government and Politics in Denmark*, 60.
[135] Elkit, "The Best of Both Worlds?," 190.
[136] Miller, *Friends and Rivals*, 9.

election exceeded fifty percent, forcing the problem of vote-splitting onto the Liberals and Conservatives.[137]

By 1913, the Liberals, Radicals and Social Democrats had worked out an agreement on constitutional change that passed the lower house but was voted down by the Conservative-dominated upper chamber. Efforts to cooperate against the Conservatives in an election that year failed as the Liberals despised the Radicals and feared the SDP. Liberal and Conservative intransigence backfired when the Radicals and Social Democrats won a majority of seats in the lower house for the first time.[138] Influenced by these new political conditions, and the end of the Conservative majority in the upper house in 1914, a compromise emerged in 1915 that partially reformed the upper house and the electoral system. Out of the complicated negotiations, the single member plurality system traditionally used for the lower house was replaced with a hybrid, semi-proportional alternative. Urban areas were grouped into multi-member constituencies and elected by PR while rural areas combined single member plurality with a top-up list. Conservatives could count on better representation in urban areas, while the Liberals protected their advantage in the countryside.[139] But more to the point, the new system would place limits on the left, eliminating the problem of vote-splitting for bourgeois parties and a potential over-representation of the left in urban areas.

The Netherlands

The only other country in Europe to reform its voting system during the war was the Netherlands. Like Denmark, the Netherlands was pitched between the combatants,

[137] Elder, *The Consensual Democracies?*, 36. The party was also strong at the municipal level, enjoying an outright majority on the Copenhagen city council by 1917 and strong showings in other cities. See Esping-Andersen, *Politics Against Markets*, 74-5.
[138] Miller, *Friends and Rivals*, 9-10.
[139] Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets*, 152; Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 79.

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dangerously close to the battle-fields, and alert to defend its precarious neutrality throughout the war.[140] While the situation undoubtedly called for a kind of social solidarity and change in the character of political competition, the conditions of neutrality could not disarm or defer the pro-democratic agenda of the electoral left as effectively as the pro-war, cross-class 'patriotic consensus' had in the belligerent states. As a result, the dramatic increase in support for the Dutch left that had been registered in the election just before the war could not be ignored. Instead, as the sacrifices of wartime deepened, traditional elites felt compelled to respond to left demands for a more open franchise while seeking institutional ways to guarantee their own continuing political influence.[141] The settlement of 1917, dubbed the 'great pacification' by scholars, extended the vote to all men, changed the voting system to a highly proportional form of PR, and entrenched in the constitution the distinctive 'pillarization' system that would assure religious elites an ongoing influence in social affairs.[142] But this was less about a recognition of 'multiple cleavages' than the palpable fear from Liberals and religious elites that the left was on the verge of a dramatic expansion into their political constituencies.[143]

Though an organized labour movement and political left emerged as early as the 1870s in the Netherlands, it remained divided and weak for most of the nineteenth century and well into the first decade of the twentieth. Unlike neighbouring Belgium, the Dutch lacked large-scale industrial development, forcing their unions to build up from more small-scale capitalist enterprises, while the organization of rural agriculture, premised on small family farms, limited the left's expansion out of urban areas. As such,

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[140] Sally Marks, *Innocent Abroad: Belgium at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 40.

[141] Hansen, "Between Reform and Revolution," 177.

[142] Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 109-11; R. Andeweg, "Institutional Conservatism in the Netherlands: Proposals for and Resistance to Change,' *West European Politics*, 12:1 (January 1989), 45.

[143] I. Scholten, "Does Consociationalism Exist? A Critique of the Dutch Experience," in R. Rose (ed.), *Electoral Participation: A Comparative Analysis*, (London: Sage, 1980), 340-1.

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attempts to mimic the Belgian left's success with political strikes to further economic and democratic initiatives were miserable failures in 1880s and in 1903. Meanwhile, electoral success for the left was limited by property restrictions on the franchise that excluded a great deal of the working class.[144] In the same period, the country's religious divisions manifested themselves in political representation for both Catholics and Protestants who vied for civil rights guarantees and state funding for church-run schools. The religious parties also responded to the emergence of the left and union organizing by establishing labour organizations of their own.[145] Though hardly a match for the secular unions, these religious versions helped maintain a working class constituency for the religious parties and gave them an interest in an expanded franchise as well.[146]

However, despite the rise of politically competitive religious parties, the key issue dividing Dutch politics at the turn of the century was not religion. Though government funding for religious schools was only finally entrenched as part of the multifaceted reform negotiations in 1917, the issue had ceased to be a point of debate in the nineteenth century. The Liberal government agreed that state funding for confessional schools did not violate the constitution in 1885, and provided the first subsidies to that end in 1889. Increases to the subsidies were agreed to in 1903 and 1905 along with state recognition of confessional university degrees and the admission of religious teachers to the state pension fund. The Liberal government was at the point of recognizing the full equality of confessional schooling with public schooling when its term ran out in 1913.[147] Nor was

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[144] E. Hansen, "Workers and Socialists: Relations between the Dutch Trade-Union Movement and Social Democracy, 1894-1914," *European Studies Review*, 7 (1977), 200-03, 209-10; E. Hansen and P. Prosper, "Transformation and Accommodation in Dutch Socialism: P.J. Troelstra and Social Democratic Political Theory, 1894-1914," *European History Quarterly*, 27:4 (1997), 476.
[145] Verkade, *Democratic Parties in the Low Countries and Germany*, 44-5.
[146] Scholten, "Does Consociationalism Exist?," 340-1; Hansen, "Workers and Socialists," 201.
[147] Scholten, "Does Consociationalism Exist?," 343-4.

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the SDP antagonistic to confessional schooling; the party had agreed to support the extension of full state subsidies at their 1902 Congress.[148]

The truly divisive issue at the start of the new century was the extension of the franchise, leading to splits in both Liberal and confessional ranks.[149] The steady increase in urban population, union density and left political representation only reinforced prejudices amongst elites against change. The SDP tried to buttress pro-reform forces amongst Liberals by encouraging left voters to support them wherever SDP candidates did not make it to the second ballot. They also discussed supporting reform Catholic candidates, though the party never formally endorsed the strategy.[150] By 1910, the overarching economic changes remaking Europe were felt in the Netherlands as well, bolstering the left. The SDP had slowly improved its representation in parliament from three members in 1897, to between six and seven in the elections of 1901, 1905 and 1909, despite the restricted franchise.[151] Having resolved some of the disputes that divided the party and organized labour, they stepped up their public reform campaign, coordinating petitions and large-scale demonstrations calling for manhood suffrage. By 1913 the party and the union central had established strong links for electoral purposes.[152] 1913 also witnessed a breakthrough for the left electorally, jumping up to sixteen members of parliament, gaining 19% of the national vote. Meanwhile, Liberal and confessional support dropped, forcing the Liberal government to offer the SDP three cabinet posts in a

[148] Hansen and Prosper, "Transformation and Accommodation in Dutch Socialism," 482-3.

[149] Verkade, *Democratic Parties in the Low Countries and Germany,* 45-9; Scholten, "Does Consociationalism Exist?," 344.

[150] Hansen and Prosper, "Transformation and Accommodation in Dutch Socialism," 488-9; 493. Though the policy of tactical support for other parties was extremely divisive within the party, leading to an ongoing battle between the leadership and different left groupings at party conventions.

[151] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe,* 62; Hansen and Prosper, "Transformation and Accommodation in Dutch Socialism," 481.

[152] Verkade, *Democratic Parties in the Low Countries and Germany,* 50; Hansen, "Workers and Socialists," 218, 221-2; Hansen and Prosper, "Transformation and Accommodation in Dutch Socialism," 493. Though, ironically, shortly thereafter the SDP failed to consult the labour movement on its decision not to join in a coalition with the Liberals after their 1913 electoral breakthrough, a slight that created considerable tension between the two groups.

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coalition government. Though the SDP declined to join the government, they had clearly emerged as a threat to the status quo even without suffrage reform.[153]

Up to the SDP breakthrough in 1913 Liberal support for some measure of franchise reform had increased, though the party wanted to apply literacy requirements and limit the extension to urban areas, thus granting little to their religious competitors. The confessional parties were split, with the aristocratic ones against reform, while those with working class support in favour.[154] The 1913 election results created a political stalemate in terms of who would govern (the crown appointed an extra-parliamentary administration) but it broke the deadlock over reform.[155] As the war dragged on, left support grew and union membership and strikes increased dramatically, moving the bourgeois and religious parties to the realization that reform could not be postponed.[156] In the negotiations that followed, both Liberals and confessional parties were keen to limit the left and counter the organizational advantage they enjoyed. Class had become the key issue as all the non-left parties attempted to fashion institutional safeguards that would prevent further socialist encroachment on their political constituencies. Constitutionalizing the rights of confessional schools in the 1917 agreement was meant as insurance against any further drop in confessional voting support.[157] PR was adopted both to limit the left to its numeric support and stem the impact of non-socialist competition between and amongst Liberal and confessional parties. Compulsory voting was added to help centre-right parties counter the organizational capacities of the left in mobilizing their voters by compelling non-socialist voters to go to the polls.[158] For their part, the

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[153] Hansen and Prosper, "Transformation and Accommodation in Dutch Socialism," 496.

[154] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 63.

[155] E. Van Raalte, *The Parliament of the Kingdom of the Netherlands*, (London: Hansard Society for Parliamentary Government, 1959), 21-2.

[156] Hansen, "Between Reform and Revolution," 184-5.

[157] Scholten, "Does Consociationalism Exist?," 345.

[158] D. Seip, "The Netherlands," in G. Hand, J. Georgel and C. Sasse (eds.), *European Electoral Systems Handbook*, (London: Butterworths, 1979), 195.

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SDP went along with the package to assure the passage of full male suffrage, a change they assumed would produce an absolute electoral majority for the left despite the 'safeguards.'[159]

The adoption of proportional voting in the Netherlands has been characterized as a sop to the Liberals for agreeing to full male suffrage and confessional school funding, an issue of 'natural justice' arising from the state of party competition, and the result of a emerging consociational approach to politics characterized by corporatist inclusion and accommodation.[160] But PR was not merely a gift to the Liberals: all the non-socialist parties were keen on it, both to limit the SDP and protect their own political viability and turf. Nor was religion or confessional school funding a divisive political issue by 1917. An arguably multi-party system had emerged in the late nineteenth century but claims for 'natural justice' in representation were not heard then from the non-socialist parties. And the 1917 negotiations hardly invoked a new era of inclusion and accommodation, as subsequent historical developments witnessed the socialists excluded from governing coalitions for the entire inter-war period.[161] What moved the adoption of the reform in 1917 was the rise the political left amid tense social conditions - war, minority government, the seeming inevitability of franchise reform - where non-socialist political forces were unsure of their standing *vis-a-vis* the left and each other. Though the Dutch left hardly improved their standing for most of the inter-war period, traditional elites had seen a slow steady improvement of left fortunes, punctuated by a sudden rise before the war - a trend that hardly appeared promising. Attention to this specific historical sequence of events leading up to adoption of PR demonstrated the class factors fueling

[159] Hansen and Prosper, "Transformation and Accommodation in Dutch Socialism," 499.

[160] Andeweg, "Institutional Conservatism in the Netherlands," 45; Hans Daalder, "The Netherlands: Opposition in a Segmented Society," in R. Dahl (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*, 207; Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation*, 109-11.

[161] Scholten, "Does Consociationalism Exist?," 346, 351. In fact, Scholten argues that the confessional parties, particularly the Catholics, did not want to normalize socialist political participation let alone sanction their participation in government.

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the shift, not religion or culture or consensus.[162] As both left and right assumed that full male suffrage would mostly benefit the left, and by extension the radical economic project they proposed, voting system reform, among other institutional arrangements, emerged as a centre-right class response.

Conclusion

Pre-war considerations of voting system reform throughout the west were informed by the strength and character of the left, regardless of regime type, related increases in industrialization, urbanization, the emergence of distinct working class communities, and the organizational capacities of unions and left political parties. By contrast, concerns over minority representation did not secure any voting system reforms, despite a long history of advocacy. In conservative countries, the emergence of distinct left political parties fuelled the adoption of proportional voting systems either to limit their influence, as in Germany, or to help fragment opposition to conservative rule, as in Finland and Sweden. Even where the left was weaker in Europe - France, the Benelux countries, Switzerland - their emergence still sparked considerable discussion of voting system reform. The 1913 electoral breakthrough of the left in Denmark and the Netherlands, and the left's influential mobilization for democratic reform in Belgium in the same year, increased the tempo of discussion for voting system change.

The fate of voting system reform in western countries during wartime also depended on the strength of the left, the nature of their involvement with the war, and the legacy of pre-war political developments. Countries in Europe faced taut political conditions that highlighted the need for social solidarity or at least a suppression of dissent. Even neutral countries faced tremendous pressures as war ravaged their

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[162] Ken Gladdish, *Governing from the Center: Politics and Policy-Making in the Netherlands,* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), 26-8.

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economies and threatened to spill over into their territory. However, where countries were neutral the left did not face the same limits in agitating for democracy as left parties in belligerent nations and pre-war campaigns continued to have effect into the war, leading to reforms in Denmark and the Netherlands. By contrast, the German left's support for the war effort limited their mobilizing efforts and seemed to strengthen conservative resolve to resist reforms.

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Chapter Four: Anglo-American Voting System Reform 1900-1918

Introduction

Prewar and wartime European considerations of voting system reform suggest the urgency attached to the issue had much to do with the size of the emerging threat from the left. But the nature of that threat was also important. Continental Europe witnessed the rise of socialist parties whose very *raison d'etre* was the eventual destruction of the old order. Anglo-American countries tended to produce labour parties rather than socialist ones, and their discourse - though often nominally socialist - was more animated by reformism and inclusion of working people in the existing polity. Though patterns of political inclusion for the working classes in the US and British dominions were as varied as Europe, the responses of traditional political elites to the challenge of labour politics were less hysterical. Anglo-American experience in competitive elections and an opportunistic approach to securing working class political support by the traditional parties conditioned elite responses to an emerging challenge from the left, influencing debate and consideration of voting system reforms.

Frustrated with state actions against union organizations and strikes, independent labour candidacies increased in the 1890s in Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. While certainly perceived as threatening and undesirable by conventional political forces, electoral forays by organized labour were generally seen as tactical and temporary. Previous efforts by farmers in the US and Canada, or Irish nationalists in Britain, had been co-opted, absorbed, managed or marginalized without recourse to voting system reform. There was little to suggest that labour would pose any more serious political threat.[1] In fact, in the US, Canada, Britain and New Zealand, the dominant political

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[1] In the late nineteenth century mainstream political forces in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada all offered 'labour' candidates in elections who ran under the party banner but were clearly identified to

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parties had all made some efforts to marshal working class support, contributing to considerable debate in labour circles about the advisability of independent political action. Even in the face of state suppression of union organizing and strikes, there were unions and left intellectuals who opposed the formation of a labour party, arguing that more influence could be brought to bear within existing parties.[2] Given the tentative nature of such a challenge, existing political elites were more concerned about how labour candidacies might hurt them competitively rather than replace them altogether. As such, most counted on the plurality system to discourage independent political action by labour candidates or parties, or they began to consider some form of majority system to marginalize these competitors, depending on the strength of the challenge. However, when labour parties did appear likely to capture state power, PR became a serious topic of discussion in Anglo-American countries, just as in Europe.

The challenge from political labour was the weakest in the United States and Canada.[3] A determined group of early progressive reformers pushed a series of campaigns for proportional voting in Oregon between 1908 and 1914 but they failed to pass in either the legislature or repeated initiative referendums. Organized labour, though involved in the campaign, were not strong enough to become an important factor.[4] Some discussion of voting system reform could be heard in the Canadian House of Commons in

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voters as a kind of labour representative, either because they were working class or associated with a particular union. For examples see Shepherd, "Labour and parliament: the Lib-Labs as the first working-class MPs, 1885-1906," in Biagini and Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism*; Kealey, *Toronto Workers Respond to Industrial Capitalism, 1867-1892;* Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence*; and R.A. Markey, "The 1890s as the Turning Point in Australian Labor History," *International Labor and Working-Class History,* 31 (Spring 1987), 77-88.

[2] For instance see Fabian arguments against the establishment of an independent labour party in M. Cole, *The Story of Fabian Socialism,* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1961), 86-7.

[3] Despite Eugene Debs' impressive run for President in 1912 when he gained six percent of the national vote for the Socialist Party, and evidence that socialist success at the municipal and state legislative level had some influence on the pro-labour and pro-reform aspects of the Democratic party program in 1914, the American left never made inroads in the national Congress, and thus never threatened the electoral viability of the existing centrist forces. See James Weinstein, *The Decline of Socialism in America 1912-1925,* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), 93-118.

[4] *Equity Series,* "PR Review," January 1911, 42; Hoag and Hallet, *Proportional Representation,* 188-89.

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1909, eventually giving rise to an *ad hoc* committee to explore the question, but the driving force was not labour but a rump of Conservative MPs from Quebec who drew support from the minority English-speaking community. Language proved a weak incentive to reform - the committee met only once.[5] Political labour was stronger in Australia, Britain and New Zealand, giving rise to independent labour parties in all three well before WWI, as well as much higher levels of interest in voting system reform.[6] The latter registered with the establishment of independent voting reform associations in all three countries before the war, eliciting interest from politicians and parties.[7] But the most telling link between labour and voting system reform was the fact that reform moved furthest and most quickly where political labour was strongest.

Though the onset of war altered the balance of political forces in most countries involved in the conflict, it did not represent a decisive break with pre-war developments. The organizational and ideological power of the left, developed in the first decade of the twentieth century and aided by the increasing urbanization and industrialization occurring

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[5] Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada," 116; Canada, House of Commons, *Hansard*, April 30, 1917, 915.

[6] Ralph Miliband characterized the British Labour party's approach to power as 'parliamentary socialism' while John Saville dubbed it 'labourism.' Both capture a great deal about the nature of 'political labour' in Anglo-American polities, particularly an abiding faith in constitutionalism and a belief in the neutrality of the state. Saville underlines the influence of a deterministic gradualism from Fabian thinking in favouring such views. A number of historians have sketched out other influential currents informing labourist politicians, including British liberal radicalism, American democratic radicalism, the Christian social gospel, as well as fabian socialism and, to a lesser extent, European Marxism. Unlike European socialist parties, then, political labour was a coalition with substantial - sometimes dominant - non-socialist participation and leadership. Though often characterized as wild-eyed radicals by their political opponents, political labour in most countries had set out from within existing political formations, usually Liberal parties, and as such tended to be more integrated into their political systems. For Miliband and Saville, see the relevant selections in David Coates (ed.), *Paving the Third Way: The Critique of Parliamentary Socialism*, (London: Merlin Press, 2003), specifically 85-7. For the intellectual influences on political labour, see Craig Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class," in L. Sefton MacDowell and I. Radforth (eds.), *Canadian Working Class History: Selected Readings*, (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1992), 355-81; and Peter Campbell, *Canadian Marxists and the Search for a Third Way*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999).

[7] Hoag and Hallett, *Proportional Representation*, 180-1, 190. A national reform association was not established in Canada until 1915 and it remained weak and largely ineffective. The American PR League did re-establish itself just before the war, becoming quite active between 1914 and 1932, but it never gained much influence beyond municipal applications.

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in western countries, was idle and muted but remained in place. The reform themes of various liberal reformers, particularly in Anglo-American countries, shifted gears amid the patriotic consensus but continued to adumbrate a politics of purity, anti-corruption, and party-less democracy. The changing circumstances required to fuel the war effort created both limits to conventional political activity and new opportunities to speak to social and political ills. In many countries the pressures of war production allowed unions to achieve significant concessions and recognition from the state but as a consequence they were expected to keep their members from striking or making excessive demands.[8] The need to get behind the war effort muted conventional political competition, making room for all-party government, anti-party sentiment, and calls for a kind of functional representation (of women, workers, farmers, etc.).[9] These developments would also produce calls for voting system reform.

United Kingdom

Like Europe, Britain had witnessed dramatic economic and social changes occur in the nineteenth century. By 1900, Britain was further than most in becoming a modern urban industrialized society, rivaled perhaps only by Germany and the United States. But the process of change had occurred much differently than elsewhere. Unlike the breakneck shift to capitalist production that occurred in Germany in the last four decades of the nineteenth century, British capitalism emerged gradually over two centuries. Perhaps more importantly, British economic and political elites were fairly united,

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[8] Melvyn Dubofsky, "Abortive Reform: The Wilson Administration and Organized Labour, 1913-1920," in James E. Cronin and Carmen Sirianni (eds.), *Work, Community, and Power: The Experience of Labor in Europe and America, 1900-1925,* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 197-220; Eley, *Forging Democracy,* 134.

[9] The emergence of all-party coalition governments in wartime was widely interpreted in many countries as the arrival of non-partisanism and nonparty rule. Many reformers hailed these developments as a step forward in democratic evolution. In the Canadian context, see Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed,* 294-5.

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without the divisions between industry and the landed classes, or religious, ethnic or regional divisions that plagued European elites.[10] As a result, British elites were more confident in responding to the upheavals of the new mass society, and more open to competing for mass support. Incremental advances in the franchise allowed the two major parties to divide and capture sections of the emergent working class by mobilizing them into the national polity and through attempts to socialize them about the 'acceptable' limits of political activity. Both parties occasionally ran labour-identified candidates in predominantly working class districts, and assumed that the emergence of an independent Labour party in 1900 was merely a temporary phenomenon. Though consideration of voting system reform emerged in Britain for many of the same reasons it did elsewhere, it did not elicit the same response. British Labour appeared weaker than left-labour forces elsewhere while British elites were more confident that they could manage the challenge.

Pre-war consideration of voting system reform in Britain mirrored developments elsewhere, particularly concerns over the rise of party discipline and independent labour politics. The Proportional Representation Society - established in 1885 but largely moribund thereafter - revived in 1905, fuelled by politician and reformer complaints about the power of modern parties and the decline of parliament and the independent member.[11] Yet as familiar as this will sound to reform elsewhere in the British Empire, there were striking differences. In Britain, the challenge of political labour was met by much better organized Liberal and Conservative parties than either Australia or New

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[10] As Lloyd George found out in his attack on landed property in the 'People's Budget,' the divide between landed and industrial wealth in Britain was not so easy to demarcate. In fact, there were close links between landed and urban wealth, and thus between the aristocracy and the industrial and commercial business elites. See G. Searle, "The Edwardian Liberal Party and Business," English Historical Review, January 1983, 47-8. For a more general discussion of the nature of British upper class unity, see Colin Leys, Politics in Britain, Second Edition, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 46-7.

[11] M. Pugh, "Political Parties and the Campaign for Proportional Representation 1905-1914," Parliamentary Affairs, 33:3 (Summer 1980), 295-6.

Zealand. Franchise reforms in 1867 and 1884 brought the most affluent members of the working class into the electorate and both of the two main parties vied for their support, fuelling the rise of permanent political party structures and organization.[12] By 1900, when the forerunner to the official Labour Party finally emerged, the Liberals and Conservatives already had considerable experience mobilizing mass electorates, and had worked through the party nomination problems that bedeviled their colonial equivalents. The entry of labour into political competition did fuel consideration of voting system reform, but its impact was mitigated by the strength of existing parties, and franchise and registration restrictions that limited the potential working class electorate. However, as elsewhere, the strategic location of labour in the political system determined whether interest in voting systems rose or fell.

That organized labour might succeed in sending their own representatives to parliament was suggested to many contemporary observers by the rise of separate Irish nationalist representation in the latter half of the nineteenth century.[13] Labour and socialist organizers did in fact elect a number of representatives to local government beginning in the 1880s, reflecting the predominant left bias of the time toward defending local rights and actions.[14] But a series of court decisions against labour organizing and strikes in the mid-to-late 1890s suggested the need for a more national political strategy. In response, the Labour Representation Committee (LRC), the precursor to the British Labour party, was founded in 1900.[15] Though both Liberals and Conservatives could

[12] See Hanham, *Elections and Party Management;* C. Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales;* Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties, Volume 1: England.*

[13] H. Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party,* as cited in Feuchtwanger, "Electoral Systems: An Anglo-German Comparison, 1867-1933," 196.

[14] J. Hinton, "Voluntarism versus Jacobinism: Labor, Nation, and Citizenship in Britain, 1850-1950," *International Labor and Working-Class History,* 48 (Fall 1995), 72; Hinton, *Labour and Socialism: A History of the British Labour Movement 1867-1974,* 61; Paul Thompson, "Liberals, Radicals and Labour in London 1880-1900," *Past and Present,* 27 (April 1964), 73-101.

[15] P. Adelman, *The Rise of the Labour Party, Second Edition,* (Harlow: Longmans, 1986), 26; H. Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party, Third Edition,* (London: Macmillan, 1968), 6.

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claim working class support, the Liberals enjoyed considerable support in mining and manufacturing districts, just the ridings where an independent Labour party would be most competitive. By 1903 the pragmatic Liberals, out of power for 18 years, had worked out an electoral pact with the LRC guaranteeing them a free hand in at least 30 seats, thus reducing the threat of vote-splitting.[16] In the 1906 general election the Liberals swept to power, with Labour candidates capturing 29 seats. Initially, the pact had obviated the need for voting system innovations by eliminating the immediate threat of vote-splitting to the Liberals and by easing the entry of independent Labour representatives into parliament. But very quickly the Lib-Lab pact generated considerable debate about its political effects, contributing to a renewed interest in alternative voting rules.

Between 1906 and 1914 elements within all parties agitated for voting system reform. A considerable number of labour activists were convinced that the Lib-Lab pact was holding Labour back, effectively limiting the party's growth.[17] They called for the adoption of the majoritarian Alternative Vote (AV) to end the pact but also reduce the risk of vote-splitting between Labour and Liberal candidates.[18] There were also those in

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[16] Adelman, *The Rise of the Labour Party*, 33-4. A few 'labour' representatives had been elected to parliament since the 1880s either as Liberals or by arrangement with the Liberal party not to contest their constituency. By 1905 there were 15 such Lib-Lab MPs in the House. Efforts to hive these members away from the Liberals to stand as independent labour MPs had largely failed, partly because few could see many differences between Liberal and labour positions on policy, but also because MPs were not paid at this time, thus making 'independent' politics more costly and risky. But in 1903 the LRC succeeded in securing union funding to pay labour MPs elected under their banner. This allowed to the LRC to enforce a degree of party discipline on its candidates and keep them from sliding toward the Liberals. Liberal party elites recognized that these developments would make labour candidates more competitive adversaries, contributing to the interest in pact negotiations. See also Pelling, *Short History of the Labour Party*, 12-3.

[17] M. Pugh, *State and Society: British Political and Social History 1870-1992*, (London: Arnold, 1994), 130-1.

[18] The Alternative Vote, or AV, is a majoritarian voting system and is intended to assure that the winning candidate gains a majority of the votes cast. However, unlike the Second or Multiple Ballot approach where multiple rounds of voting occur, AV accomplishes this on one ballot by having voters mark a preference amongst candidates numerically. Thus voters would mark a '1' by their first choice, a '2' by their second, and so on. At the end of balloting, the first choices are added up and if any candidate has gained a majority they win and nothing further occurs. However, if no candidate gains a majority, then the lowest vote-getter is eliminated and that candidate's ballots are redistributed on the basis of the second preferences marked. This process of eliminating the least popular candidate and redistributing their ballots on the basis of

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the Liberal party who supported AV for similar reasons. Parliamentary Labour leader Ramsay Macdonald supported AV but there were others in the party who feared it would widen the conflict between Liberal and Labour activists. Other members did not see Labour increasing its electoral support in the near future and instead proposed the adoption of PR to better reflect their support.[19] But here too the party was split, with Macdonald and the other leaders fearing that PR would weaken the 'progressive alliance' Labour had established with the Liberals and limit Labour's influence on government policy. At the same time, the leadership worried that in allowing the various elements of Labour's coalition separate representation, PR might destroy the basis for party unity.[20] Liberal leaders had similar concerns. There were Liberals also promoting PR as a means of reconciling religious and nationalist differences in Ireland, particularly after the escalation of hostilities there from 1910 on. Conservative interest in voting system reform was initially limited to the minority of members defending free trade, though eventually interest spread to include those concerned that the Lib-Lab pact might keep their party from power indefinitely.[21]

The debates over voting systems within all parties were influenced by considerations of political advantage and party strength. But there has been little

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preferences continues until a candidate secures a majority or all preferences have been exhausted. AV can also be used for multi-member constituencies. While AV will assure that riding winners gain a majority of voting support, it does not address the other typical concern raised about plurality voting, namely the distortion between the proportion of the votes cast for parties and the proportion of seats won.

[19] PR had long been a labour and left issue in Britain, with support from the early socialist Social Democratic Federation (SDF) in the 1880s and trade union support by the turn of the century. A number of unions even elected their own executives using PR. See Barrow and Bullock, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement*, 9, 17; and Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 168; Pugh, "Political Parties and the Campaign for PR 1905-1914," 303.

[20] Macdonald's reasoning resembled the Fabian opposition to PR in that it might dilute leadership and make decisive government more difficult. The Fabians called for the elimination of the semi-proportional cumulative vote in 1901, then in use for school board elections, because it allegedly led to poor turnout and theological voting. See Barrow and Bullock, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement*, 147-8.

[21] Pugh, "Political Parties and the Campaign for PR 1905-1914," 299-303.

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consensus then or since about the dynamic of the Edwardian party system in Britain.[22] A number of academic commentators have suggested that Labour was weak in this period, essentially dependent on the Liberals for representation.[23] Critics point out that Labour rarely beat the Liberals in a three-cornered fight.[24] Others argue that class voting preceded the rise of the Labour party and that the Liberals were the beneficiary, largely as a result of their progressive policies.[25] Yet the Liberals were concerned enough about the Labour challenge to strike a Royal Commission on voting systems in 1909. The Royal Commission looked into proportional and majority voting systems, examining Belgium's recent conversion to PR, continental experience with various majority systems, as well as previous British experiments with the limited and cumulative vote. In 1910, the Commission recommended the adoption of AV for elections to the House of Commons, a proposal the Liberal cabinet apparently seriously entertained. But the report was overshadowed by the constitutional crisis over the budget between the government and the House of Lords and only briefly debated in the House of Commons.[26] As it happened, the Lib-Lab pact held through the two 1910 elections, with many viewing Labour's only modest increase in representation as a sign of the party's decline.[27] Liberals may have viewed Labour as a containable threat, one unworthy of voting system reform.[28]

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[22] Keith Laybourn, "The Rise of Labour and the Decline of Liberalism: The State of the Debate," *History*, 80:259 (June 1995), 207-26.

[23] P. Clarke, "The electoral position of the Liberal and Labour parties 1910-1914," *The English Historical Review*, October 1975, 828-9.

[24] N. Blewett, *The Peers, the Parties and the People*, as cited in H. Matthew, R. McKibbon, and J. Kay, "The franchise factor in the rise of the Labour Party," *The English Historical Review*, July 1976, 740.

[25] P. Clarke, "Liberals, Labour and the franchise," *The English Historical Review*, April 1977, 584.

[26] Martin Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace 1906-18*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 13-5; Pugh, "Political Parties and the Campaign for PR 1905-1914," 299. Pugh suggests that the Liberal cabinet almost included AV in the 1912 Franchise Bill but feared a delay in passing the bill.

[27] Pugh, "Political Parties and the Campaign for PR 1905-1914," 304.

[28] The Liberals had long worried over the contradictions inherent in pursuing working class votes. Since the early competition from municipal socialist and labour candidates in the 1880s and 1890s, Liberals found that to keep potential Labour voters they had to champion more radical policies. However, when they did take up more radical positions, they risked losing more middle class voters to the Conservatives. Given that even the reformed franchise of 1885 was still heavily biased toward the middle class, the cost of competing with labour candidates on their own terms remained high right up to 1918. See Thompson, "Liberals, Radicals and Labour in London," 78-80.

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But another view sees the rise of Labour as the key political force moving the Liberals left, fuelling their progressive initiatives, with the potential threat of Labour's unique party structure and organization only held in check by the pact. In power, the Liberals proved much less progressive than their platform suggested, delivering on some important union legislation and social measures, but backing off when proposals elicited too much business criticism.[29] Despite a veneer of 'social democracy,' social liberals in the party found themselves trumped by the fact that the Liberals were as much a party of business in Britain as the Conservatives, maybe more so.[30] As George Dangerfield so floridly described them, the Liberals of the period were "an irrational mixture of whig aristocrats, industrialists, dissenters, reformers, trade unionists, quacks and Mr. Lloyd George" held together only by an "almost mystical communion with the doctrine of laissez-faire." But as he quickly added, "Asquith's cabinet was very far from being the democratic group which its radical supporters might have wished for." Instead, aside from a few self-made men like Lloyd George, they were as much part of the 'ruling class' as the Conservatives.[31] As such they might be better compared to the French Radicals of the period rather than continental social democrats. Deal-making with Labour, then, was less about a policy consensus between the two than an effort to exploit the Liberals' strategic position in the centre of the political spectrum. For instance, not long after the Liberals were secretly conducting pact negotiations with Labour they were also trying to effect a centre-right coalition deal with disaffected Conservatives, a strategy they kept in reserve throughout the Lib-Lab pact era, and put into effect a few years after it expired.[32]

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[29] Searle, "The Edwardian Liberal Party and Business," 40; Laybourn, "The Rise of Labour and the Decline of Liberalism," 217.

[30] Searle, "The Edwardian Liberal Party and Business," 46. Searle notes that the Liberal defence of free trade kept many business supporters with the party despite its social programme.

[31] G. Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England 1910-1914*, (1935; New York: Capricorn Books, 1961), 72-3.

[32] V. Bogdanor, "Literature, Sources and Methodology for the Study of Electoral Reform in the United Kingdom," in S. Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms: Origins of Voting Systems in*

Ultimately the policy debates between Liberals and Labour were less important to Liberal party strategists than the structural barriers blocking Labour's advance. Despite improvements to the franchise in 1867 and 1884, Britain was far from entertaining full male suffrage. In 1911 seven different franchises were in operation under a host of specific qualifications. The 1911 Census reported that nearly eight million voters were on the electoral register, corresponding to 17.5% of the population, 29.7% of the adult population and 63.3% of adult male population. However, half a million of these names represented plural votes. Subtracting these multiple votes, it appears that only 59% of adult males could vote in 1911.[33] The 41% missing from the list - nearly five million potential voters - were not a random cross-section of British society, they were primarily working class males. Put in these class terms, even the 59% figure is misleading as there was a great deal of regional variation, with heavily working class districts showing even lower levels of enfranchisement.[34] But the franchise was not the only barrier to working class participation. Britain's complex voter registration system made it difficult for working men to get on and stay on the electoral register as it discriminated against those that had to move for work.[35] Meanwhile, the shift to single member ridings in 1885 inflated the number of plural votes available to the affluent and, particularly in urban areas, greatly facilitated them being cast.[36]

The institutional barriers to an expansion of Labour's electorate however did not preclude them from creating problems for the Liberal party, a fact that kept voting system

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Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries, 347. See also G. Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England,* 38.

[33] N. Blewett, "The Franchise in the United Kingdom 1885-1918," *Past and Present,* 32 (December 1965), 31.

[34] Matthew, McKibbon and Kay, "The franchise factor in the rise of the Labour Party," 727-8.

[35] Blewett, "The Franchise in the United Kingdom 1885-1918," 34-5.

[36] Blewett, "The Franchise in the United Kingdom 1885-1918," 44. Registration was also a cost that fell unevenly on the parties, with Conservatives in a particularly good position to pay solicitors to make sure the rolls were full of Tory voters. While mostly adding to Blewett's analysis, Grace Jones argues that the registration and plural voting rules primarily benefited the Tories. See Grace A. Jones, "Further Thoughts on the Franchise 1885-1918," *Past and Present,* 34 (July 1966), 134-8.

debate alive. Strong labour candidacies contributed to a series of Liberal by-election losses in 1912 and helped re-animate interest in AV within the party.[37] In addition, Liberals grew concerned about the dramatic increase in strikes and labour militancy after 1910, especially as a key region of support for the party was the industrial north.[38] For their part, the Conservatives strongly opposed AV, seeing it as a means of sustaining the successful Lib-Lab pact and keeping the Tories from power, while a minority in the party expressed interest in PR as an alternative. Labour remained divided on voting system reform with some members advocating AV while others called for PR. However, when separate resolutions calling for the party to endorse AV or PR hit the floor of the Labour party convention in 1914, both were defeated despite considerable support.[39]

The state of the debate over voting system reform in Britain before World War I reflected the uncertainty that the parties felt about their future electoral prospects and those of their competitors. Liberal concerns about Labour focused on vote-splitting. As long as the electoral pact held, a pact that kept Labour in a decidedly junior position, voting system reform appeared unnecessary. When Labour appeared to be considering a more independent path, or improved their representation in by-elections or local elections, Liberal interest in voting systems increased dramatically. However, before WWI, the threat from Labour was never enough to make reform a government priority. For their part, Labour leaders held conservative views about the party's potential electoral

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[37] Clarke, "The electoral position of the Liberal and Labour parties 1910-1914," 830; P. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 328. Labour also made dramatic gains at the local level between 1910 and 1914. See Laybourn, " The Rise of Labour and the Decline of Liberalism," 214. One indication of Liberal interest in voting system reform was the private member's bill for AV in 1914 from Liberal C.H. Lyell, though he failed to convince the Liberal majority to support him. See Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 169-70.

[38] P. Adelman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party 1910-1931*, (Harlow: Longman, 1981), 5-6; Hinton, *Labour and Socialism*, 93-4.

[39] Pugh, "Political Parties and the Campaign for PR 1905-1914," 301-02. Considerable debate had broken out in the Labour press about PR between 1912 and 1914 with Macdonald almost single-handedly squaring off against activists and other MPs in criticizing PR. For the 1914 convention vote on PR Barrow and Bullock suggest Macdonald used his influence with the miners' unions to have the issue voted down. See Barrow and Bullock, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement, 1880-1914*, 274-83.

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advance, with some calling for PR to better reflect their limited support, while others argued for the status quo to maintain the 'progressive alliance' with the Liberals. Some Labour activists thought the party could improve its standing and advocated the majoritarian AV to prevent Lib-Lab vote splitting but, in the end, they could not convince their party. In the Conservative party, interest in voting systems, specifically PR, emerged initially from internal battles over free trade. However, after two defeats in the back-to-back elections of 1910, Conservatives found PR more compelling.[40] The Royal Commission report of 1910 had set out three scenarios that might move the adoption of PR in Britain: an extension of the franchise, the emergence of three or more evenly matched political parties, or an increase in political competition driven by religious interests.[41] While on the radar, none of these predictions had come to pass before World War I. Only with regard to Ireland did British legislators appear ready to embrace PR, incorporating it into the 1914 home rule bill that was passed by Parliament but - due to fierce opposition from Ulster and the outbreak of war in Europe - never proclaimed.[42]

Initially, the war did little to alter the seeming consensus on the voting system, some debate over voting rules did emerge from a special all-party electoral reform committee established in 1916, before the break in the party system. Given the fact that the current parliament had extended its own term due to the war, Asquith responded to calls for reform to the franchise, constituency boundaries and voter registration by establishing a special Speaker's Conference that would include representatives from all the parties. However, when Asquith's Liberal-led all-party coalition administration was

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[40] Pugh, "Political Parties and the Campaign for PR 1905-1914," 300-04.

[41] Bogdanor, "Literature, Sources and Methodology for the Study of Electoral Reform in the United Kingdom," 350.

[42] Hart notes that class factors emerged explicitly in the debate over PR for Ireland with its supporters worrying that - if given the vote - the country's poor rural majority would deny the well-to-do adequate representation and thus influence. See Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 170-6. The 1914 bill would have applied PR to all of the Irish Senate and a proportion of the seats for the Irish House of Commons.

replaced with Lloyd George's Conservative-dominated, all-party government, the scope of the conference broadened considerably.[43] Before the war, the dominant opinion about the voting system in all the parties was for the status quo.[44] Now that all the parties were internally divided to a greater or lesser extent, with some supporting the war administration while others opposed it, the status quo no longer appeared as attractive. Even the Conservative members of the government, easily the most supportive of the war effort, were suspicious of Lloyd George's long-term intentions and how supporting him might affect their party.[45] Lloyd George himself entertained many ideas about how Britain's party system might be renewed after the war, sometimes leaning towards reconstituting the Liberal party, but also considering the formation of a new centre party that would take votes from Labour, Liberals and free trade Conservatives.[46] The Irish question was also on the mind of politicians, as the violent Easter weekend uprising in 1916 and the emergence of Sinn Fein as political competition for the Irish Nationalists made voting reform an issue.[47] As the committee's work spilled into 1917 increases in labour militancy highlighted the potential future gains of Labour.[48] Amid such pervasive uncertainty, the Speaker's Conference surprised parliament with a sophisticated set of electoral reforms, addressing a whole range of what had been considered longstanding and seemingly intractable problems. They also called for the introduction of a measure of PR.

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[43] Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace 1906-18*, 70-2.

[44] Pugh, "Political Parties and the Campaign for PR 1905-1914," 304-5.

[45] Adelman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party*, 18, 31.

[46] Over his long political career Lloyd George shifted regularly between anti-business populism and an anti-left hysteria, considering a 'government of businessmen' to answer the deadlock of 1910, a return to the progressive alliance whenever the war was over, the creation of a new centre party in 1919, and a formal left-liberal coalition to answer the Depression. See Searle, "The Edwardian Liberal Party and Business," 39-40; Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, 394; and Adelman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party*, 29, 55.

[47] Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace 1906-18*, 128-31, 163.

[48] Hinton, *Labour and Socialism*, 102, 105-6; Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 182-3.

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The recommendations that emerged from the Speaker's Conference represented a finely balanced set of trade-offs on divisive issues like the franchise, voter registration, plural voting, majority and proportional voting, and others. For instance, the Conference members understood the introduction of PR into urban areas as a concession to Conservatives in return for extending the vote to the remaining unenfranchised working men. Though most assumed that the expansion of the electorate would primarily benefit the Liberal and Labour parties, PR would allow the Conservatives some 'minority' representation in urban areas where they were typically shut out.[49] However, right from the start of the deliberations over the Reform Bill in the House of Commons the PR component came under attack from Conservative members. Before the war there had been noises amongst Conservatives about voting system reform, particularly after the two back-to-back election defeats in 1910. Many on the right blamed the Lib-Lab pact for their losses and feared their party might never return to power. Divisions within the party also generated some support for PR from free traders and other minority factions. But, on the whole, Tories were opposed to or uninterested in voting system reform. The 1917 proposals did little to further the cause on the right, at least in the Commons. The Reform Bill would introduce PR in some urban areas but see the majoritarian AV put in place everywhere else. Conservatives had two objections to the plan. First, AV was seen as an anti-Tory reform as it would primarily ease the threat of Liberal and Labour vote-splitting. Second, PR would limit the number of plural votes that could be cast by introducing multi-member districts, a reform that would mostly hurt the Tories.[50] Early in the discussions the Conservatives narrowly passed an amendment effectively deleting PR from the bill. In successive votes Conservative opposition to PR only grew larger.

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[49] Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace, 1906-18*, 82-3.
[50] Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace 1906-18*, 6, 83, 115, 122.

Ironically, Tory machinations only furthered the cause of AV in the bill, extending its proposed use to all single member ridings.[51]

Tory opposition to PR in the House of Commons might have ended the debate quickly but for Tory support for PR in the House of Lords. Having just lost an extended battle with the Commons for supremacy, the Conservative-dominated Lords were concerned about the future of their chamber and the moves toward democracy emanating from below. When the Reform Bill reached the Lords they re-introduced PR, deleting the Commons' preference for AV in all ridings.[52] The Lords reasoned that a PR House of Commons would be far less majoritarian and less open to radical vote swings. Agricultural interests were also concerned about an expansion of urban voting power and sought PR as a means of diluting it.[53] The Lords' championing of PR opened a tug of war between the two houses as the Commons insisted on AV and the Lords kept inserting PR. Despite their recent loss, the Lords reckoned that stalling the Reform Bill might prevent it being put in place before the next election, a result the Commons politicians wanted desperately to avoid, and the Lords used this threat as leverage. Finally a compromise was struck that would eliminate AV and see PR applied to a select number of constituencies, to be decided upon by a committee of the Commons.[54] However, after the Reform Bill was dutifully passed and proclaimed, the subsequent report setting out the constituencies for PR was voted down.[55] Despite the deep divisions in all parties and the uncertain political conditions that might accompany a postwar election, Britain's status quo politicians were not worried enough to countenance a switch to PR.

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[51] Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace 1906-18*, 109, 123-4, 158.
[52] Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace 1906-18*, 156, 163-4.
[53] Homer Lawrence Morris, *Parliamentary Franchise Reform in England from 1885-1918*, (New York: 1921), 188-9; Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace 1906-18*, 162.
[54] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 186; Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace 1906-18*, 165-6.
[55] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 195-6.

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Australia

Earlier than elsewhere in the Commonwealth, political labour in Australia emerged as a competitive and potentially governing force.[56] Starting in the 1890s as a response to the state attacks on union organizing and strikes, labour politicians were elected in most of the colonial territorial legislatures, holding the balance of power in New South Wales, the largest Australian colony, in 1891 and the first federal government in 1901.[57] The strength of political labour played a decisive role in the drive for Australian unity, assuring the process was much more democratic than it had been in Canada in the 1860s. Labour would also prove decisive in debates over voting system reform, especially as organized itself into a more formal party.

One of the first tasks taken up by the new Australian federal government in 1901 was the selection of voting systems for the lower House of Representatives and the Senate. Much of the public and political debate echoed the familiar themes of nineteenth century reformers - the defence of a supposedly traditional British two-party system, the need for effective representation to limit party rule, etc.[58] But the choices were arguably more influenced by the nature of the party system that had emerged in the struggle over the new federation, coalescing in broad coalitions for protection or free trade,

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[56] There is some debate over the character of political labour in Australia. Nairn contends that Australia's Labour Party was essentially labourist and little interested in socialism but Markey, in a literature review of the party's history, suggests that socialism and labourism were two important influences among many that contributed to ongoing party debate and organizational struggles depending on the historical moment, at least until the party became a contender for government. Meanwhile Lovell claims that Australian socialism was unique compared to European approaches as a result of its strong working class base rather than any theoretical innovations. See B. Nairn, *Civilizing Capitalism: The Beginnings of the Australian Labor Party,* (1973; Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1989); Markey, "The 1890s as the Turning Point in Australian Labor History," 31 (Spring 1987), 79; and David W. Lovell, "Australian Socialism to 1917: A Study of the Relations between Socialism and Nationalism," *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 40:4 (1994), 151. There was also a pronounced American influence, particularly the ideas of Edward Bellamy and Henry George. See L.G. Churchward, "The American Influence on the Austrialian Labour Movement," *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zeland,* 5:19 (November 1952), 258-77.

[57] Markey, "The 1890s as the Turning Point in Australian Labor History," 79; Loveday, "New South Wales," in D.J. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880-1920,* 25.

[58] B. Graham, "The Choice of Voting Methods in Federal Politics, 1902-1918," *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 8:2 (November 1962), 167-9.

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characterized by varying degrees of party discipline. The link between a reformer discourse concerned about the power of parties and the political pragmatism of potential governing parties was Labour's organization in the constituencies and discipline in the house. Party-like behaviour had long been developing amongst the leading politicians to finance political campaigns and expedite the management of government business through the house, giving rise to the occasional lament of backbench MPs and newspaper editors about the 'decline of parliament.' But Labour's superior cohesion as a party became quickly evident, reinforcing reformer criticisms about party behaviour and signaling a serious competitive threat to the dominant political players.[59]

Australian's first national government comprised a liberal protectionist party with Labour support arrayed against a conservative opposition committed to free trade. The voting system debate essentially revolved around the future of political labour. The protectionist government proposed the majoritarian AV for the lower house and the proportional Single Transferable Vote (STV) for Senate elections, reasoning that both systems would help them in working with Labour against free trade supporters.[60] The protectionists also lacked the Labour party's discipline and could not prevent multiple candidacies in single member ridings between competing protectionist hopefuls, leading to votes-splits and party dissension - transferable balloting would lessen this problem too.[61] But the official opposition was not prepared to agree to a voting system that would primarily help the government manage its disparate coalition at election time and argued for the maintenance of plurality voting. Free traders believed that Labour would eventually fold into the protectionist party, leading to their preferred two-party system. And in the interim, vote-splitting amongst protectionist forces would aid the cause of free

[59] Alexander Brady, *Democracy in the Dominions: A Comparative Study of Institutions, Third Edition,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958), 204-5, 207.
[60] Graham, "The Choice of Voting Methods in Federal Politics," 167-8.
[61] J. Rydon, "Electoral Methods and the Australian Party System," *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 2:1 (November 1956), 76.

trade. Amongst protectionists themselves, opinion was divided with some government and some Labour members also opposed to the reforms. Though the Labour party initially supported the government's initiative, helping it pass in the lower house, the protectionist party split on the issue and the reform failed in the Senate.[62] Eventually plurality voting was adopted for both houses.

The free trade forces' predictions about the future of the party system were not borne out. Instead of disappearing, Labour grew stronger and formed its first - albeit minority and short-lived - national government in 1905. By contrast, support for the protectionist party collapsed, slipping from 46% in 1901, to 28% in 1903, to just 23% in 1906.[63] The waning protectionist party tried to interest Labour in AV in 1906 but political conditions had changed and reform sentiments had shifted accordingly.[64] Working from the state to the federal level, the continuing rise of Labour fuelled a realignment of Australia's party system, shifting the axis from protection versus free trade to Labour versus anti-Labour forces. Now that the brunt of vote-splitting had shifted to candidates opposed to them, and the party could foresee capturing power on their own, Labour was less interested in reform. Meanwhile, those opposed to Labour tried to 'fuse' themselves into a single opposition party, with varying degrees of success.[65] The difficulty of this process would contribute to a resurrection of proposals for voting system reform at both the state and federal level.

The first reform to emerge from this process involved the re-adoption of the proportional STV in Tasmania in 1907. Tasmania had used STV for elections to its lower house from its two main urban centres in 1897 and 1900 but abandoned the

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[62] Graham, "The Choice of Voting Methods in Federal Politics, 1902-1918," 168-9.
[63] Graham, "The Choice of Voting Methods in Federal Politics, 1902-1918," 169-70.
[64] B. Reilly and M. Maley, "The Single Transferable Vote and the Alternative Vote Compared," in S. Bowler and B. Grofman (eds.), *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta Under the Single Transferable Vote*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 41.
[65] John Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth, 1890-1910*, (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976), 242-54.

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practice under pressure from its upper house and because the complicated counting appeared to make little difference in the results. The 1900 election was also shrouded in controversy as a disgraced politician regained election in one of the PR constituencies, leading some to condemn the voting system as open to abuse.[66] As Australia's smallest state, Tasmania's economic development at the turn of the century was primarily rural and its politics remained personal, with little organized party activity.[67] Labour representatives were only first elected in 1903, promoted by a number of different *ad hoc* organizations. However, with three seats and 10% of the state-wide vote, a formal Labour party was soon established. By the 1906 election, Labour support had risen to 27% and eight seats in the Tasmanian lower house. Labour's rise put pressure on non-labour politicians to found some party organization of their own or risk splitting the non-Labour vote. But creating a formal party out of disparate, personalistic political forces proved slow and difficult. Nor did the scale or type of economic development in Tasmania lead to the sorts of political divisions that had reinforced the trend towards more formal party organization amongst non-Labour forces elsewhere in Australia. In the end, the return to the proportional STV system in 1907 (this time extended across the state as whole) reflected the keen desire of anti-Labour politicians to avoid having to embrace the party model, with its extensive electoral organization and legislative discipline.[68] STV allowed a personalistic form of politics to survive because it permitted

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[66] Scott Bennett, "Political Corruption, the Fall of the Braddon Government and Hare-Clark Voting: E.T. Miles, 1899-1900," *Tasmanian Historical Research Association: Papers and Proceedings*, 39:4 (December 1992), 156.

[67] Patrick Weller, "Groups, Parliament and Elections: Tasmanian Politics in the 1890s," *Tasmanian Historical Research Association: Papers and Proceedings*, 21:2 (June 1974), 89-103.

[68] C. Hughes, "STV in Australia," in S. Bowler and B. Grofman (eds.), *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta Under the Single Transferable Vote*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 158-9. STV did not ultimately eliminate the need to form a formal centre-right party in Tasmania. Eventually the anti-Labour forces did meld together into the Liberal party, with links to the same national political party. Nor did STV slow the advance of Labour or block their entry to government. Labour's support rose to 39% in 1909, allowing them to form a short minority government (one week). In 1914 Labour returned to power for two years with Liberal support. Finally, in 1934 Labour won their first majority government and held

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anti-Labour politicians to run separately without risking vote-splitting while at the same time limiting Labour representation to its proportional vote.

The Tasmanian reforms represented a repudiation of the general trend toward greater party organization and discipline that characterized political change across western countries, particularly in larger, more economically complex societies. In doing so, they echoed a strong reform criticism emerging nearly everywhere in the west about the 'evils' of party domination. Yet anti-party arguments could take many forms. Voting reform associations underlined how PR would weaken boss and party rule in favour of a better quality of political candidate. But mainstream politicians also complained about the encroaching power of parties as they were subject to competitive nomination contests, increasing demands for campaign funds, and pressures for disciplined voting in the house. Labour and farmer politicians had their own 'anti-party' arguments, claiming that old-style party representation should be replaced by more direct representation of different groups in society - workers, farmers, women, etc.[69] Yet all these complaints could not reverse the direction of party development. While small, economically backward Tasmania could resist the pull of the party form, at least temporarily, most locales in

power in Tasmania uninterrupted until 1969. See Hughes and Michael Denholm, "Playing the Game: Some Notes on the Second Earle Government, 1914-1916," *Tasmanian Historical Research Association: Papers and Proceedings,* 23:4 (December 1976), 149-52.

[69] Anti-party sentiments were rife amongst voting system reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, though the American political scientist John Commons was an exception. See R.B. Walker, "Catherine Helen Spence and South Australian Politics," *Australian Journal of Politics and History,* 15:1 (April 1969), 35-46; John R. Commons, *Proportional Representation, Second Edition,* (1907 Reprint, New York: August M. Kelley Publishers, 1967). This anti-party theme only intensified in the reform periods around WWI. In wartime Britain, H.G. Wells - declaring the British masses "utterly disgusted with parties" - summed up some of the key anti-party arguments of reformers, suggesting that PR was "organizer-proof," and that it would allow independents to get elected. See Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System,* 192. For a representative sample of farmer and populist anti-party sentiments, see David Laycock, *Populism and Democratic Thought in the Canadian Prairies, 1910-1945,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 46-51, 80-5. Ireland actually incorporated anti-party and direct representation ideas into its Senate. Through an elaborate nomination process different social groups - farmers, workers, religious elites, etc. - were supposed to gain representation, though the system never really operated in this manner as party affiliation quickly became more important. See J.H. Whyte, "Ireland: Politics Without Social Bases," in Richard Rose, *Electoral Behavior,* (New York: Free Press, 1974), 625.

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western industrialized countries could not. Parties represented a collective action strategy aimed at the state, largely given shape by zero-sum economic disputes that required decisive government action so that development could move in one direction or another. Labour parties sharpened these disputes, forced political responses and heavily influenced party organization and form, but they were not the only influence bringing parties into being. As could be seen in Britain, Canada and the US, parties of a sort were already coming into being before labour parties arrived.

Outside of Tasmania, the political differences between non-Labour forces could not be settled within a framework of personalistic politics. But creating a party out the disparate collection of free traders and protectionists, farmers and merchants, and liberals and conservatives - basically all the groups opposed to Labour - was not much easier. When the fusion process initiated in 1909 eventually produced federal and state Liberal parties after 1910, the new parties remained unstable, faction-ridden, and prone to very public disputes over their many disagreements.[70] Anti-Labour forces in New South Wales, now Australia's largest state, responded to the problems engendered by the need for centre-right political unity by adopting the majoritarian Second Ballot in 1910. The Second Ballot allowed all centre-right politicians to campaign on their particular issue for their first vote, but regroup behind a single anti-Labour candidate on the second. From 1911 on, most states adopted the majoritarian AV, which basically facilitated the same process.[71] But voting system reform alone proved inadequate in blocking Labour. Despite the introduction of the Second Ballot, Labour won the 1910 state election in New South Wales, their first majority government victory in what was arguably Australia's most important state. The problem of party discipline would need to be worked out for

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[70] Rickard, *Class and Politics*, 242-54; Graham, "The Choice of Voting Methods in Federal Politics, 1902-1918," 170.
[71] Rydon, "Electoral Methods and the Australian Party System," 76.

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the anti-Labour forces even with the added flexibility provided by majority voting systems.

Voting system reform initiatives moved more slowly at the federal level, despite a similar political dynamic to the state contests. In 1909 the remnants of the dwindling Protectionist party joined forces with free traders to form the Fusion party, later renamed the Liberal party, in a bid to prevent Labour from coming to power. But Labour won its first majority government in 1910, leaving the Fusion/Liberal forces to work out what went wrong. From 1910 to 1913 the party focused on building up their local and organizational strength. As for the voting system, Liberal leaders appeared to assume that the threat of Labour and the constraints of all or nothing plurality voting would be enough to produce party solidarity and discipline. They exhibited little interest in voting system reform after their defeat, and did not support a private members bill for preferential majority voting in 1911. Eventually state level reforms would prove influential, convincing federal Liberal leaders that majoritarian voting systems might offer the best way for them to manage their divided coalition because it could facilitate a more decentralized, flexible party structure than the Labour model. The Liberals returned to power with a bare majority government in 1913 and established a Royal Commission to examine voting system reform. Later they endorsed the commission recommendations in favour of AV for the lower house and STV for the Senate. When the government fell in 1914 the Liberals campaigned promising voting system reform if re-elected. However, Labour won the election and the report was shelved.[72]

Labour was enjoying its third tilt at federal government, their second with a majority of seats, when the war and conscription split the party and their administration.[73]

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[72] Graham, "The Choice of Voting Methods in Federal Politics, 1902-1918," 170-1.
[73] The degree of the devastation can be seen in comparing the number of Labour governments at the state and federal level between 1915 and 1916. In just one year the party slipped from holding power in seven governments to just one (Queensland). See D. Murphy, "Queensland," in D.J. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880-1920*, 194.

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Labour's misfortune became an opportunity for reformers to revive their campaign for new voting systems. Pro-war Labour and Liberal MPs combined into a new National party, an amalgamation that promised to be competitive with Labour, if it could hold together beyond the crisis of war.[74] But no sooner had National formed than it faced a new threat from the country's farmers. Farmers had long been an unhappy member of the Liberal coalition. Hurt by protectionist policies and marginalized politically since the demise of the free trade party, they had worked to a position of influence within the Liberal party by 1913, eliciting promises of voting system reforms that would assure farmers better representation within the party and parliament.[75] The Liberal government campaigned to bring in voting system reforms in 1914 but lost the election to Labour, who dropped the issue. The sudden return to power of Liberals with pro-war Labour members in the election of 1917 seemed to offer farmers some hope that their concerns would be heard.[76]

Though the new government had a healthy majority, they felt very vulnerable, unsure whether the labour component of their vote would stick or drift back to the Labour party in subsequent by-elections and general elections.[77] They also faced increasingly strident demands from their farmer allies. Even before the May 1917 victory for National members of the government suggested voting system reform would be a priority, a

[74] Ken Turner, "From Liberal to National in New South Wales," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 10:2 (August 1964), 205-20.

[75] Graham, "The Choice of Voting Methods in Federal Politics, 1902-1918," 170-1.

[76] However, Stock suggests that perhaps a majority of farmers did not support conscription for fear of rural labour shortages, a factor that distanced them from the Liberals and National coalition, perhaps fueling their independent political efforts. See Jenny Tilby Stock, "Farmers and the Rural Vote in South Australia in World War I: The 1916 Conscription Referendum," *Historical Studies*, 21:84 (April 1985), 391-408.

[77] Indeed, by 1919 National legislators recognized that the popularity of former Labour and now Nationalist wartime PM W.M. Hughes was probably their key asset. See Conrad Joyner, "W.M. Hughes and the 'Powers' Referendum of 1919: A Master Politician at Work," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 5:1 (May 1959), 20. This insecurity also manifest at the state level, particularly New South Wales, where another Labour government had split and a National coalition had emerged. See Loveday, "New South Wales," in D.J. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880-1920*, 98-9.

promise re-iterated a year later.[78] In the meantime the farmers had not been idle. From 1914 they had begun forming their own separate political organizations that then agreed to lend support to 'friendly' Liberal candidates.[79] By 1916, more militant farmers were pushing for independent political action to further their goals, including placing their own candidates to run for office.[80] Clearly National government promises about voting system reform were related to these developments. In January 1918 the farmers stepped up the pressure, informing the government of their plans to run their own candidates in future regardless of how it might split the vote. In a letter to the Prime Minister they spelled out the consequences, noting explicitly that "without ... reform your party will be in serious jeopardy at the next election."[81] A few months later, with no reform forthcoming, the farmers put up their own candidate in a by-election, refusing to withdraw until the government explicitly promised reform just two days before the poll. But when a series of fall by-elections were called, and the government had still not delivered on its promise, the farmers launched their own political campaign. The results were Labour victories in both cases, primarily as a result of voting splitting by non-Labour candidates. With Labour support on the rise and the farmers clearly serious about independent political action, the government finally relented and rushed through legislation introducing AV for the lower house just before another by-election was due. The reform served its purpose. Though Labour topped the poll in the first count, the subsequent transfer of votes allowed the farmer's candidate to win the seat.[82] Granting farmers their own political space was

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[78] Graham, "The Choice of Voting Methods in Federal Politics, 1902-1918," 172.

[79] By this time farmers had already taken up direct political action successfully at the state level, making threats at the national level more serious. See J.R. Robertson, "The First Years of the Western Australian County Party, 1912-1916," Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand, 11:43 (October 1964), 343-60.

[80] Graham, "The Choice of Voting Methods in Federal Politics, 1902-1918," 171.

[81] Graham, "The Choice of Voting Methods in Federal Politics, 1902-1918," 172.

[82] Graham, "The Choice of Voting Methods in Federal Politics, 1902-1918," 173-4. Farmer grievances over issues like price-fixing also played into broader concerns over the government's conduct of the war, with returning soldiers organizations also calling for reform. See Marian Sawer, "Australia: Replacing Plurality Rule with Majority-Preferential Voting," in Colomer (ed.), Handbook of Electoral System Choice, 478-9.

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the price paid to defeat Labour.[83] Anti-Labour sentiment also fuelled the adoption of STV in New South Wales in 1918.[84]

New Zealand

In neighbouring New Zealand, voting system reform became a political issue in the pre-war period for many of the same reasons it did in Australia - problems of party discipline and the emergence of independent labour politics. As a remote settler county keen to attract and keep immigrants, New Zealand had moved quickly to enfranchise both women and men before the turn of the century. This early mass politics increased the saliency of working class issues, leading to the introduction of arguably pro-labour legislation like compulsory arbitration for contract disputes in the 1890s, even though unions themselves were small and weak.[85] As in Britain, unofficial lib-lab candidacies were accommodated by the reform-oriented Liberals in government. In fact, the early Liberal party was officially known as the Liberal and Labour Federation.[86] This was a

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[83] It also reflected the organizational weakness of the National party in 1918-19. See B.D. Graham, " The Place of Finance Committees in Non-Labor Politics, 1910-1930," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 6:1 May 1960), 47.

[84] Hughes, "STV in Australia," 160-1. Labour had formed a minority government in New South Wales in 1910 despite 49% of the popular vote, a result that would have translated into a majority under normal circumstances. The key to the result was unity of the anti-Labour forces in not splitting their vote, aided by the just-introduced Second Ballot. However in 1913 Labour's vote declined marginally, though this time the party did gain a majority of seats. Faced with the unpredictability of the voting system, and similar dynamics in the state to the national level in terms of a Lib-Lab National government, a shift toward a more proportional voting system reform must have appeared the best way to limit Labour. For vote totals see Loveday, "New South Wales," in Murphy, *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880-1920*, 42.

[85] John E. Martin, "Unemployment, Government and the Labour Market in New Zealand 1860-1890," *New Zealand Journal of History*, 29:2 (October 1995), 193-5; Erik Olssen, "The Working Class in New Zealand," *New Zealand Journal of History*, 8:1 (April 1974), 44-60; James Holt, "The Political Origins of Compulsory Arbitration in New Zealand: A Comparison with Great Britain," *New Zealand Journal of History*, 10:2 (April 1976), 106. As Holt makes clear, where unions were strong they did not typically support compulsory arbitration. However, where they were weak governments had little incentive to introduce it. The novelty in New Zealand was the combination of a sizeable working class electorate and the colony's need to hold on to immigrants.

[86] Though Hamer notes that despite the name labour supporters were effectively marginalized in the organization, and lib-lab candidates tended to do poorly until 1908 (when independent labour politics emerged seriously). See David Hamer, *The New Zealand Liberals*, (Aukland: Aukland University Press, 1988), 185-6.

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very loose form of party government and it was not uncommon for rival candidates supporting the government to square off at election time.[87] As a result, government supporters, including the Prime Minister, repeatedly called for consideration of majority voting systems that would act as a kind of primary, alleviating the party of the divisive problem of choosing between a number of potential standard bearers.[88]

In just about every year from 1890 to 1908 proposals were made in the lower house for a new, usually majoritarian, voting system, but most failed to gain much support.[89] However, the situation began to change just after the turn of the century as the constituent components of the government coalition became increasingly antagonistic to one another.[90] The Liberals' compulsory arbitration laws had helped fuel unionization rates but as unions grew stronger they became impatient with the arbitration system and more militant in their demands to employers, especially as the cost of living kept rising.[91] From 1905 various efforts were made to launch a labour party that would be independent of the Liberal government.[92] Meanwhile, farmers who relied on rural workers grew alarmed by the rise of organized labour and increasingly joined a new political effort known simply as Reform.[93] Thus labour's militancy and independent political action

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[87] Hamer, New Zealand Liberals, 110-12, 232, 234-5.

[88] Hamer, New Zealand Liberals, 230.

[89] K. Jackson and A. McRobie, New Zealand Adopts Proportional Representation, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 25.

[90] Hamer, New Zealand Liberals, 185. New Zealand Liberals faced pressures similar to those facing liberals everywhere, basically a tension between economic liberals pursuing business and middle class support on the right and social liberals attempting to woo working class support on the left.

[91] Erik Olssen, "The Origins of the Labour Party: A Reconsideration," New Zealand Journal of History, 21:1 (April 1987), 82; Erik Olssen, "The Seaman's Union and Industrial Militancy, 1908-13," New Zealand Journal of History, 19:1 (April 1985), 14-37.

[92] Jim McAloon, "A Political Struggle: Christchurch Labour Politics 1905-1913," New Zealand Journal of History, 28:1 (April 1994), 22-40; Libby Plumridge, "The Necessary but not Sufficient Condition: Christchurch Labour and Working Class Culture," New Zealand Journal of History, 19:2 (October 1985), 130-50; Hamer, New Zealand Liberals, 189-90.

[93] B.D. Graham, "The County Party Idea in New Zealand Politics, 1901-1935," in Robert Chapman and Keith Sinclair (eds.), Studies of a Small Democracy, (Aukland: Blackwood and Janet Paul, 1963), 177-8.

finally pushed the government to seriously consider voting system reforms.[94] Faced with increased political competition, a string of by-election losses in 1907, and the faction-ridden nature of their own Liberal party, the government adopted the Second Ballot majority system in 1908. Reasoning that the new Labour party's voters and rivals factions within the Liberal party would all lend their support on the second ballot to the strongest candidate, most likely a Liberal, the reform answered both problems of party discipline and the challenge from their political competitors.[95]

The Second Ballot was used in the 1908 and 1911 elections but it did not work out as the Liberal government had planned. Some Liberals proved unwilling to support other government candidates after their preferred choice was eliminated, and the opposition parties demonstrated a keen tactical appreciation of the opportunities afforded by the new system.[96] In the 1911 contest Reform even went so far as to encourage its supporters to choose Labour over the Liberals where a Reform candidate had been eliminated with hopes of defeating the government.[97] Despite the use of majority voting, the 1911 election did not return a majority government. The Liberals now turned against the Second Ballot system and intended to replace it with AV but were defeated in the House before any action could be taken. Though Reform had proved adept in using the Second Ballot to their advantage in the 1911 contest, they gauged the system's ultimate impact to be in swinging the Liberals left and effecting some rapprochement between the government and their estranged Labour allies.[98] Besides, the strategic voting required by the Second Ballot system put a strain on the new party's fragile coalition. Not

[94] Hamer, *New Zealand Liberals*, 185, 269. Hamer notes that elements within the governing Liberals, the opposition, and the business community were pressing for the creation of an anti-socialist party by 1908 and suggests that the Second Ballot emerged as an alternative.

[95] David Hamer, "The Second Ballot: A New Zealand Electoral Experiment," *New Zealand Journal of History*, 21:1 (April 1987), 102-05; Hamer, *New Zealand Liberals*, 266; Jackson and McRobie, *New Zealand Adopts PR*, 25-6.

[96] Hamer, *New Zealand Liberals*, 309-12, 321-2

[97] Hamer, *New Zealand Liberals*, 336.

[98] Hamer, *New Zealand Liberals*, 344.

surprisingly, even though they were committed to some form of majority voting, Reform repealed the Second Ballot in favour of a return to the plurality system. The fact that Labour had been the most consistent, if minor, beneficiary of the majority experiment might also have been influential.[99] But opinion remained evenly divided on the question. Reform had committed to introducing STV for the upper Legislative Council as part of changing it from an appointed to elected chamber. When a Liberal member seized on this commitment to propose STV for use in the lower as well, the measure nearly passed, failing by just one vote. Perhaps as compensation to those keen on reform both inside and outside the house, the government did pass a bill allowing municipalities to adopt PR if they wished.[100]

Canada/United States

As the war got underway, political reformers in North America seized on the consensual mood to step up their campaign to rid government of corruption and special interests. The American Proportional Representation League, founded in 1893 but operating at a low level of activity since 1896, re-established its offices and quarterly journal in 1914. Failure to capture the attention of federal or state politicians moved the League to focus on municipal reform by advocating the adoption of PR by city councils. In 1915, the League enjoyed its first victory when its executive director convinced the council in Ashtabula, Ohio - population 22,082 - to adopt proportional voting. Further north, Canadian activists secured and won a plebiscite on PR for the Ottawa city council in 1916, and later that year established a Canadian PR Society.[101] Very quickly, voting system reform was added to a host of progressive initiatives that had roots in the North

[99] Hamer, "The Second Ballot," 108-11; Jackson and McRobie, *New Zealand Adopts PR*, 26.

[100] Jackson and McRobie, *New Zealand Adopts PR*, 28-9.

[101] Hoag and Hallett, *Proportional Representation*, 197; *PR Review*, October 1915, 12-3; *PR Review*, January 1916, 24.

American farmer-based populist movement of the late nineteenth century, and the more recent urban-based liberal progressive movement. In the United States PR became part of a package of civic reforms focused around introducing city managers and smaller councils to make city government more professional and efficient.[102] In Canada, PR was taken up by the emerging farmers movement, organized labour and reform Liberals in the west.[103] Under these circumstances, PR generated support for all sorts of reasons, some contradictory. Some claimed PR would better represent parties while others claimed it would eliminate parties, some argued it would give representation to the 'working man' while others claimed it would make government more 'business-like,' and so on. But despite considerable effort, the reform initiative quickly stalled. Though activists in Canada could convince reform-minded Liberal provincial governments to pass enabling legislation for municipal uses of PR, those same politicians refused to consider introducing it for their own provincial elections.[104] In the US, state level politicians were even more hostile as municipal politics was often run on party lines, unlike Canada where local contests were typically officially non-partisan.[105]

A more critical factor in raising the question of voting system reform at the time, particularly in Britain and its English-speaking dominions, was the political realignment brought on by debate about conducting the war, specifically the role of conscription. For the belligerent continental European countries the patriotic consensus had had to be developed quickly from the outset of the war. But for those more distant from the actual

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[102] Leon Weaver, "The Rise, Decline, and Resurrection of Proportional Representation in Local Governments in the United States," in B. Grofman and A. Lijphart, *Electoral Laws and their Political Consequences*, (New York: Agathon Press, 1986), 140-1.

[103] D. Pilon, "Proportional Representation in Canada: An Historical Sketch," paper presented to the Canadian Political Science Association Annual General Meeting, June 8-10, 1997, St. Johns, Nfld., 11-23.

[104] D. Pilon, "The Drive for Proportional Representation in British Columbia, 1917-23," (Masters thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1996), 34.

[105] Weaver, "The Rise, Decline, and Resurrection of PR in Local Governments in the US," 143-4; J. Harris, "The Practical Workings of Proportional Representation in the United States and Canada," Supplement to the *National Municipal Review*, 19:5 (May 1930), 339-67.

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fighting - Australia, Canada, even Britain - many key issues were deferred, especially if they might be politically costly. Compulsory enlistment for war purposes was one such issue, dividing members of the Labour government in Australia, the Conservative and Liberal parties in Canada, and the Liberal government in Britain.[106] However, by 1916 the war in Europe was at an impasse. In the absence of decisive leadership, and under the strain of wartime privations, anti-war sentiments began to re-emerge in public debate and demonstrations. There was even talk in British Prime Minister Asquith's cabinet about suing for peace. The idea of peace with Germany infuriated pro-war forces and led to a polarization of politics around the conduct of the war, including the policy of introducing conscription.[107] The debate nearly led to a split in the Liberal-led coalition government in Britain and fractured the Labour government in Australia, leading to the establishment of a new government there comprised of pro-war members from different parties.[108] In Canada, the governing Conservatives wooed pro-war Liberals from the opposition benches into a new Union government in 1917, then promptly called an election essentially on the conscription issue and won a decisive victory. For both winners and losers, the changes were unsettling and unclear in their long-term implications. From committee rooms and party conventions, discussion of voting system reforms would

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[106] Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*, 250-74; Murphy, "Queensland," in D.J. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880-1920*, 194; Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party*, 38-9; Hinton, *Labour and Socialism*, 101; Adelman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party 1910-1931*, 17-8.

[107] R. Douglas, "The background to the 'Coupon' elections arrangements," *The English Historical Review*, April 1971, 318-22.

[108] Unlike its dominions, the British realignment did not centre around conscription but more general questions about the conduct of the war. To avoid an election that he thought his party might lose, Liberal PM Asquith had managed to form an all-party coalition government in the Spring of 1915. Conscription emerged as a potentially divisive issue in December but Asquith stalled with half measures for a few months until he could no longer avoid it. The real split came when cross-party intrigue put his Liberal rival Lloyd-George in the Premiership in December 1916 and Asquith's supporters left the government for the opposition benches. See P. Adelman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party 1910-1931*, (Harlow: Longman, 1981), 17-20.

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become gradually more prominent in response to this instability in the various party systems.

In Canada and Australia voting system reform emerged out of debates within parties as opposed to parliament. The Canadian Liberal party had split on the conscription issue, with most English-speaking MPs joining the Conservative-dominated Union government. The rump that remained were mostly Quebec members, reflecting that province's opposition to involvement in foreign wars, and a few sympathetic English members like the future leader W.L. Mackenzie King.[109] The Liberals had explored the question of PR internally in 1916 just as the conscription question was rising to prominence, but little came of it. After the split, the Liberals that remained loyal to the party, specifically in English Canada, began considering PR as a means of maintaining their presence outside of Quebec.[110] For their part, the Union government showed little interest in voting system reform. With no left party to worry about, and their main adversary hopelessly divided, the government foresaw little danger in sticking with the status quo.[111]

Conclusion

In Britain and her colonies discussion of voting system reform had everything to do with the strength of independent labour politics, with various partial or temporary reforms introduced in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. But the recourse to voting system reforms was not automatic. In Britain, where traditional elites had more experience in mobilizing a mass electorate and creating party discipline, the left challenge was initially answered by maintaining a highly exclusionary set of franchise and

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[109] Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*, 270-3.
[110] *PR Review*, 40 (October 1916), 8; Phllips, "Challenges to the Voting Systems in Canada," 135.
[111] The Union government's deputy PM and Finance Minister Thomas White ably defended the British anti-PR view in a pre-Union debate on the question in April 1917; see Canada, House of Commons *Hansard*, April 30, 1917, 908-11.

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registration laws and effecting an electoral pact between Labour and the Liberal party that largely precluded the need for voting system reform, despite considerable interest in the topic. Still, in Britain as elsewhere, the increase in labour militancy and strikes in the period immediately preceding the world war kept voting system reform on the agenda. Only the onset of war decisively quelled reform efforts, though it would prove a temporary reprieve.

In Anglo-American countries, the war effort opened more space for some of the pre-war reform issues like municipal reform, the critique of parties, and the grievances of farmers, all of which fuelled interest in voting system reform (though without much success). However, when politically difficult issues like conscription had to be faced, leading to a dramatic realignment of party systems, voting system reform became a much more serious issue, especially where the left was strong. Still, reforms were not undertaken lightly. Though British and Canadian parliamentary committees called for plurality to be replaced by the majoritarian AV, the recommendations were ultimately rejected. In New Zealand and Canada the class cleavage would prove too weak to inspire voting system reform. In Britain, both Conservative and Liberals were divided internally about the threat posed by political labour, and a realignment of the party system that could absorb Labour or more effectively marginalize it still seemed likely well into the war. Only Australia moved to enact reforms, and then only because the government faced clearly suicidal competition from both Labour and an emerging independent farmers' movement.

The gradual emergence of Anglo-American mass government, even in the United States, informed elite responses to the rise of labour and socialist politics. A kind of quasi-democracy had emerged out of the nineteenth century in most and appeared to be capable of managing the contradictions related to their specifically capitalist character.

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The ambiguity of political labour when compared to European socialism also divided elite opinion, with some making no distinctions while others viewed them as lost sheep that would soon be re-absorbed back into the fold. Yet Anglo-American elites also kept voting system reform at hand, just in case political labour appeared close to gaining power or moving in a more radical direction.

Chapter Five: The Rise and Fall of Voting System Reform 1918-1939

Introduction

The period immediately following World War I offers a concentrated view of the conditions fuelling the consideration and adoption of new voting systems in western countries. All of Europe and most of the Anglo-American countries either changed their voting system or debated adopting a new one in the tumultuous years that followed the peace, offering an excellent opportunity for comparison. As will become clear, contrary to conventional accounts, voting system reform was not driven by consensus but by conflict. The war had altered the class composition of western countries and mobilized their populations to demand not just political inclusion and greater government accountability but a more expansive form of government, a kind of social democracy. The resulting political and social struggles forced the concession of minimally democratic government across the west but the fine print accompanying the negotiations often included a shift to proportional voting as one means of furthering or containing the new democratic polity. The sense of threat and the experience of existing political elites would condition the degree to which these struggles would shift to more institutional locales like voting systems.

The postwar period contains two distinct thrusts as concerns voting system reform, one well known but rather brief period involving the ascendancy of PR as the norm for voting in European democracies, and another less well-documented period of decline of interest in voting system change and reversal of the reform process in some cases. This chapter divides these developments into two sections, one a comparative recounting of PR's rapid rise across western countries, and another showcasing its slow decline, with attention to the conditions fuelling both processes.

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Section I: The sudden rise of proportional representation 1918-21

From the end of 1918 to 1921 voting system reform became a key concern in western industrialized countries. In Europe, a wave of change swept the continent. This included newly-independent countries like Finland, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, defeated nations like Germany and Austria, war victors France and Italy, and neutral countries like Switzerland, Norway and Denmark. In fact, by 1920 every country on the continent used some form of PR. Britain continued to debate voting system reform and introduced PR for Irish local elections in 1919. PR became a key part of the settlement establishing a quasi-independent Ireland in 1920. The New Zealand and Canadian parliaments considered the question, and two Canadian provinces adopted PR for urban areas. The sudden conversion to proportional voting has been explained as a trend, the victory of pro-democratic sentiments at the war's end, and an effort at greater social inclusion.[1] But the key reason for the dramatic surge of voting system reform was fear. Across Europe and the British dominions the war's end provoked a social upheaval traditional elites had never seen before. The makings of revolution suddenly appeared evident in locales as different as Stockholm, Berlin, Turin and Winnipeg. A delicate dialectic of reform and revolution pushed change in the immediate postwar period as various social forces tried to find their footing amid dramatically changed circumstances. Voting reform would become part of the strategy on all sides.

The end of the war brought disaster to the losers and, after an initial wave of euphoria, uncertainty everywhere else. Throughout eastern and central Europe conservative regimes collapsed, sparking civil war, declarations of independence, or simply chaos. Stretched beyond limits both socially and economically by the needs of

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[1] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 91; Daadler, "The Netherlands," (1966), as cited in Scholten, "Does Consociationalism Exist?," 345.

war, Germany appeared on the brink of revolution, while the Austro-Hungarian empire simply ceased to exist.[2] Newly-minted nations like Austria and Poland immediately faced dire food and energy shortages. In western Europe officially-neutral Belgium was seriously damaged in the fighting, with eighty percent of its workforce unemployed by the war's end.[3] Even victorious nations were uncertain about the future, particularly those under wartime coalition government. Political realignments effected to prosecute the war had divided parties and created new ones but whether these shifts would hold or return to previous patterns under conditions of peace was unclear. Political elites also faced a more organized and articulate civil society, as the process of 'total war' had mobilized citizens into claims-making networks and strengthened organized labour and farming interests. Everywhere, public expectations began to rise with the end of hostilities, not just for peace and prosperity, but for more democratic government as well.

Throughout the winter and spring of 1919 western countries witnessed a rising level of social revolt, ranging from sporadic strikes and demonstrations, to general strikes and revolutionary insurgency. Pent-up demands from organized labour, returning soldiers, and the general public spilled out once the discourse of wartime unity could no longer be invoked, giving rise to volatile, sometimes violent, situations. These patterns of postwar upheaval could be traced to wartime conflicts like the European food riots and rent strikes of 1915-16, and the significant increase in union militancy and strikes from 1917 on. The patriotic consensus of 1914 had clearly frayed by 1916. Governments tried to shore up working class support by legally recognizing unions and compelling employers to bargain collectively, but the effects were often temporary as union leaders had difficulty constraining their members. Debate on the left re-emerged in 1915-16 with

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[2] D.K. Buse, "Ebert and the German Crisis, 1917-1920," *Central European History*, 5:3 (September 1972), 234-55.
[3] M. Macmillan, *Paris 1919*, (New York: Random House, 2002), 248-9, 277.

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two conferences aimed at re-establishing an international anti-war front, though the effect was initially more symbolic and organizational than influential. Yet by 1917 socialist parties everywhere were increasingly debating their war commitments, while in Germany a considerable group of SPD members were forced out of the party for voting against war credits. In most locales, the patriotic consensus had effectively ended by September 1917.[4] Mass actions increased, becoming a way of registering discontent over war policies and, more indirectly, the war itself. The use of such tactics only increased after the war.[5]

However, arguably the most influential event fuelling social upheaval near the end of the war and after was the Russian Revolution of October 1917. As Geoff Eley notes, the Russian Bolsheviks struck at the fatalism of European socialism, demonstrating that a revolution could be made by people rather than the ineluctable laws of capitalism.[6] Strikes increased dramatically in Europe in 1918, confirming for some Bolshevik predictions of a coming European-wide revolution.[7] But Bolshevik influence was not restricted to organizations of the working class; they also set a powerful example for nationalist movements in eastern Europe and Ireland. More broadly, the Russian Revolution and its egalitarian ideals (if not always its practice) stood in stark contrast to the lingering conservative rule of most of Europe, signaling that a new order - different than the corrupt regimes responsible for the war - was possible. Initially conservatives reacted with horror, resisting even more fiercely efforts for more democracy. Germany's

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[4] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 128-37. For a more in-depth treatment of Britain and Germany, see F.L. Carsten, *War Against War: British and German Radical Movements in the First World War*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).
[5] Cronin, "Labor Insurgency and Class Formation: Comparative Perspectives on the Crisis of 1917-1920 in Europe," 125-52.
[6] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 152.
[7] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 153-4. Another way to understand the dramatic increase in strikes is to examine the sharp incline in union densities across western industrialized countries between 1914 and 1920. For example, in Britain male union density rose from an already high 29.5% in 1914 to 54.5% in 1920. See George Sayers Bain and Robert Price, *Profiles of Union Growth: A Comparative Statistical Portrait of Eight Countries*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 37.

ruling conservatives continued to block democratic initiatives at home and abroad. In fact, German support was crucial in giving conservatives in the newly independent Finland (temporary) victory over their more democratic opponents in the 1918 civil war.[8]

But Germany's defeat by the fall of 1918 shattered what was left of anti-democratic conservative forces in Europe, eventually contributing to democratic capitulations in Belgium, Sweden, Finland and most of the former Austro-Hungarian empire. Meanwhile, the survival of the revolutionary regime in Russia continued to inspire great swathes of the European left, fuelling an increasing radicalization in their ranks from the war's end well into 1920. Spring 1919 was probably the most revolutionary moment in twentieth century European history, with Soviet-style regimes (briefly) established in Hungary, Bavaria and Slovakia, while the left appeared dominant in Germany and Czechoslovakia and on the rise elsewhere. Factory council movements established during the war took on a quasi-governing role in some countries, threatening to morph into a soviet dual-power system.[9] The left re-established its international organizations with a meeting of both allied and entente socialists in February 1919, while the Russian Soviets established a Communist International a month later.[10] And regular strikes, occupations and demonstrations emerged in all western countries. Capitulations to democracy and these militant, sometimes revolutionary, outbursts were clearly related. Even fairly conservative commentators on the events allow that the "Bolshevik revolution helped work a miraculous change of attitude among the Western ruling classes" as they

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[8] Anthony F. Upton, *The Finnish Revolution 1917-1918*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 338-9; Haapala, "How was the Working Class Formed?," 195; Collier, *Paths Toward Democracy*, 88-9; Alpuro, *State and Revolution in Finland*, 176. In the spring of 1918 the Finnish 'whites' considered repealing the universal franchise in favour of a more restricted version based on wealth and status. See Jussila *et al*, *From Grand Duchy to a Modern State*, 123.

[9] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 153-63. For a more in-depth treatment, see F.L. Carsten, *Revolution in Central Europe 1918-1919*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

[10] Gerhard Ritter, "The Second International, 1918-1920: Attempts to Recreate the Socialist International and to Influence the Peace Treaties," *Europa, A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2:1 (Fall 1978), 11-32.

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worried just how far down the path of revolution their subjects might go.[11] The timing of the reforms clearly responded to apparent shifts in radical strength and activity, both at home and abroad (particularly in Europe). Though the shape of a country's party system and its experience with mass elections were mitigating factors, all countries were concerned about this rise of revolutionary fervor. Wherever the left appeared strong and conservatives were weak or divided, the democratic settlement was accompanied by 'guarantees' like voting system reform.

Germany/Eastern Europe

Germany was the first country to switch voting systems in the postwar period. With the ink barely dry on the Kaiser's resignation letter, the last Imperial Chancellor hurriedly turned power over the SPD's parliamentary leader Friederich Ebert on November 9, 1918, thus saddling the left with the role of brokering the peace. Ebert quickly formed a provisional government in coalition with the independent socialists and issued two decrees on November 12, one establishing Germany as a democracy, and another introducing full PR for all elections.[12] Ebert's decree was hardly surprising. PR had long been popular with the SPD and its introduction had been party policy since the Efurt programme of 1891. Moreover, a majority of German deputies had endorsed a more limited version of PR for Reich elections as recently as July 1918. If anything was surprising, it was the absence of any opposition to the measure at all. Conservatives, formerly intransigent opponents of PR for the Reich, now demanded it. Liberals, who

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[11] Macmillan, *Paris 1919*, 95. However, on the whole Macmillan downplays the impact of the revolutionary events across Europe, preferring to focus on the ideas and personalities of the great leaders as key factors in the postwar settlement. But this represents a backward step from previous generations of scholarship that managed to combine a sense of the revolutionary threat and its impact on society and elites. See John M. Thompson, *Russia, Bolshevism, and the Versailles Peace*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); and Arnold J. Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counter-revolution at Versailles*, (New York: Afred A. Knopf, 1967).

[12] Hastings, "Proportional Representation and the Weimar Constitution," 68-9.

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had sought to limit the proportionality of the wartime proposals, now supported a maximal form of PR. Even the SPD, though long supportive of PR, might have been expected to produce some proponents of plurality now that the party could clearly benefit from it - but they did not.[13] Everyone was now for PR, though not for the same reasons. When the new Reich election law - including PR - was formally announced November 30 there were no objections.[14]

The consensus for PR was produced in part by the lack of consensus on much else. From the start, competing visions of a new Germany struggled for pre-eminence, with the independent socialists and factory councils favouring a soviet-style revolutionary regime, the SPD and the trade unions for a democratic socialist republic, the centre and liberal parties calling for a limited democracy, and the conservatives (privately) still preferring no democracy at all.[15] Divisions on the left were particularly acute. The SPD, fearful of the army's loyalty to the new regime, spent the first months after the war suppressing soviet-style insurrections.[16] The trade unions were also threatened by the factory council movement and tended to support the SPD over the independent socialists.[17] But despite these divisions there was broad support on the left for economic - not just political - democracy, either in factory councils or some other form, and through the extension of a host of social rights and services.[18] PR allowed for a basis of unity on the left to emerge despite their differences. Though opposed to the left's economic democracy proposals, the centre-right parties were more fearful of revolution and they quickly embraced a more thorough-going democratic agenda, offering strategic support to the SPD as the best bulwark against insurrection. Employers moved quickly in October

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[13] Hodge, "Three Ways to Lose a Republic," 175.
[14] Hastings, "Proportional Representation and the Weimar Constitution," 73.
[15] C. Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 56, 63.
[16] Berman, *The Social Democratic Moment*, 142.
[17] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 65.
[18] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 140.

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1918 to recognize trade unions and the eight-hour day as a kind of 'inoculation' against radicalism.[19] At the party level, centre-right support for PR was meant to convey a commitment to democracy, thus heading off revolution with reform, and represent a concession to a longtime aspiration of the Social Democrats. Of course, they were aware that PR would also conveniently serve to deny the left the kind of over-representation that had been common for traditional parties under the majority system.[20] Thus both left and right had good reasons to favour reform. In debates over the provisional constitution in January 1919 and a more permanent version six months later, only one speaker raised concerns about PR.[21] When an even more highly proportional version of PR was introduced in 1920 it passed unanimously.[22]

As these social and economic struggles played out in Germany, similar tensions fuelled support for PR in all of the states emerging from the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires.[23] Economic conditions across the former empires in January 1919 were terrible, with foreign observers predicting complete social collapse without significant foreign aid.[24] The steep economic decline fuelled support for the left, making them the leading force in government in most countries.[25] Poland's military leader Pilsudski was considered a kind of socialist, Karl Renner's socialists headed things up in Austria, the

[19] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 54-6, 59-60.
[20] Niehaus, "Historiography, Sources and Methods of Electoral and Electoral Law Analysis in Germany," 151.
[21] Hastings, "Proportional Representation and the Weimar Constitution," 89, 118. While some, like the distinguished social scientist Max Weber, still had concerns about PR they did not raise them publicly. See Wolfgang Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 372, 388, 398.
[22] Ziegler, "PR in the Social and Political Conflict in Germany," 146.
[23] Hoag and Hallett, *Proportional Representation*, 281, 283-6.
[24] Macmillan, *Paris 1919*, 248-9.
[25] Macmillan and Eley both suggest socialist influence was minimal or at best secondary to nationalism in the revolutions in central and eastern Europe. However, Alpuro argues that socialists had substantial, often majority, support across the region and that this only increased between 1917 and 1919. See Alpuro, *State and Revolution in Finland*, 237-41, 245-50. T. Hajdu also takes seriously the socialist elements of these revolutions, suggesting it combined in particular ways with pacifist, peasant and nationalist aspects. See T. Hajdu, "Socialist revolution in Central Europe, 1917-21," in Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (eds.), *Revolution in History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 103.

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socialists were in control in Czechoslovakia by 1919, and a socialist was leader in Hungary before being edged out by his communist ally Bela Kun.[26] As in Germany, conservatives were deeply disturbed to see the left in positions of power, but they took some solace from the fact that socialists were saddled with the terrible burden of governing in dire times. But at the same time conservatives also sought some insurance against left hegemony in voting system reform. If the left stumbled, or their economic democracy plans got out of hand, the right wanted many avenues open to limit or defeat them. As it turned out, left influence declined rapidly in eastern Europe into the 1920s, often actively suppressed by authoritarian, nationalist, and anti-democratic parties and leaders.[27]

Of course, there were other considerations aiding voting system reform that were specific to the conditions in central and eastern Europe. Though the Austro-Hungarian empire was comprised of many clearly distinguishable regions and nationalities, its break-up into separate states raised difficult questions about borders, resources, and internal minorities. Language and ethnic groups did not always fall into neatly contained geographical areas. Many areas contained mixed populations, leading to interminable wrangles between different states about where they 'belonged.' The question of borders was sorted out by the victorious powers at the Paris Peace conference that sat throughout most of 1919. As each of the former Austro-Hungarian territories made their claims, PR was often mentioned to assuage concerns about decisions that would place significant minority populations within a certain country. Czechoslovakia argued for the inclusion

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[26] Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish Soviet War, 1919-20*, (London: Macdonald, 1972), 63, 98, 270-1; Vaclav L. Benes, "Czechoslovak Democracy and its Problems 1918-1920," in Victor S. Mamatey and Radomir Luza (eds.), *A History of the Czechoslovak Republic 1918-1948*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 62-3; Peter Pastor, *Hungary Between Wilson and Lenin: The Hungarian Revolution of 1918 and the Big Three*, (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1976), 38. Davies claims that Pilsudski gave up his leftism in his youth but cites many examples where his natural allegiances appear to remain with the left.
[27] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 159.

of the Sudeten Germans, suggesting that PR would assure they would not be overwhelmed by the dominant Czechs and Slovaks.[28] Sometimes PR facilitated particularly difficult factional disputes within countries, or aided establishing maximum unity within the new country as it struggled against its neighbours for advantage. The new Yugoslavia was deeply divided between the centralized approach of the Serbian elites and the more pan-slavic federal view of the Croats and Bosnians, almost to the point of preventing unification. But at the same, the Serbs had territorial ambitions that could only be successfully pursued in a union with the other slav groups. Poland was also divided between competing armies and leaders. Given that in each of these countries, none of the players could be certain about their strength *vis-a-vis* their opponents, PR became a means of brokering some of these disputes.[29] In Finland, the reactionary 'whites' had won the civil war in the spring of 1918 but their plans to introduce a monarchial form of government and roll back the quasi-democratic gains of 1906 and 1917 stalled with the fall of their German sponsors. Under pressure from the victorious western powers, a more moderate centrist group emerged that sanctioned the return of the moderate left and marginalized the extreme right.[30] The maintenance of PR helped facilitate this delicate post-war balancing act.

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[28] Benes, "Democracy and its Problems," 66-7; Macmillan, *Paris 1919*, 237. For the peace-makers, PR was at most a minor consideration in granting various borders. Much more important were considerations based on economic viability and responsibility for the war.

[29] Macmillan, *Paris 1919*, 116-7, 209-10. Similar conditions led to the use of PR in Russia's 1916 constituent assembly (under Kerensky) and when Iceland gained a measure of independence in 1916. See Hoag and Hallett, *Proportional Representation*, 284. For similar reasons PR was also to be used for the aborted constituent assembly that was scheduled to be held in May 1918 in the Ukraine. See John S. Reshetar, *The Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1920*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 149-50.

[30] Jorma Kalela, "Right-Wing Radicalism in Finland During the Interwar Period," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 1 (1976), 110; Esa Sundback, "Finland, Scandinavia and the Baltic States Viewed Within the Framework of the Border State Policy of Great Britain from the Autumn of 1918 to the Spring of 1919," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 16:4 (1991), 315.

The neutral countries in Europe

Europe's neutral countries also faced increasing economic and social instability towards the end of the war. In Norway and Switzerland, these conditions were accentuated by wartime election results that were skewed against the left. Norway's Labour party gained 32% of the vote in both the 1915 and 1918 elections but captured around 15% of the seats in both cases.[31] Meanwhile, the long dominant Liberal party captured 40% of the seats in the 1918 contest with just 28% of the vote. Labour was outraged and demanded the immediate introduction of proportional representation amid threats to boycott future elections.[32] When the war ended, amid increasing labour militancy, the influence of revolutionary conditions wafting west from Russia, Finland and even Sweden, and a strong sense that rules of the game were rigged against them, the Labour party moved left, eventually joining the Soviet-led Communist International.[33] Like other European countries, the mainstream parties responded to the undercurrent of revolution with reform, finally offering to switch from majority to proportional voting. It helped that Norway's Conservative party had long called for PR to shore up their support and that the dominant Liberals could now discern a clear pattern of decline in their hegemony.[34] In Switzerland, the bias against the left was more extreme. In the 1917

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[31] In fact, as their vote went up their number of seats in the Storting declined, from 23 in 1912 to 19 in 1915 and 18 in 1918. See Ryssevik, "Parties vs. Parliament: Contrasting Configurations of Electoral and Ministerial Socialism in Scandinavia," 31.

[32] Matthews and Valen, *Parliamentary Representation: The Case of the Norwegian Storting*, 37.

[33] Esping-Andersen, *Politics Against Markets*, 79-80; Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 177; Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 33; Sten Sparre Nilson, "A Labor Movement in the Communist International: Norway, 1918-23, in Schmitt (ed.), *Neutral Europe between War and Revolution 1917-23*, 135. Some argue that Norway's left was markedly more radical than other comparable Scandinavian countries and that this can be attributed to the country's more rapid process of industrialization but these conclusions are disputed. By contrast, Nilson suggests that the Norwegian radicalism was not out of line with the more general levels of social upheaval emerging across western Europe between 1917 and 1921. See Trond Gilberg, *The Soviet Communist Party and Scandinavian Communism: The Norwegian Case*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1973), 17-22; and Sten Sparre Nilson, "Labor Insurgency in Norway: The Crisis of 1917-1920," *Social Science History*, 5:4 (Fall 1981), 393-416.

[34] Henry Valen and Daniel Katz, *Political Parties in Norway*, (London: Tavistock, 1964), 26; Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 91-2.

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national election the Social Democrats gained 31% of the vote, but just 12% of the seats. Though they had the second highest percentage of support, they gained fewer seats than the third place Catholic Conservatives, a party with just 17% of the popular vote. This echoed similar results for the left in national elections in 1908 and 1911.[35] The left had successfully gained enough signatures just before the war for another referendum on PR but the governing Radicals, the key beneficiaries of the current system, stalled the process, utilizing questionably legal practices to do so.[36] Demonstrations and strikes increased from 1917 fuelled mostly by labour and war concerns but the increase in 'direct action' was also informed by a sense that the political system was effectively rigged against the left.[37] This culminated in a general strike in the fall of 1918 where PR was a key demand. Fearing that left support was on the rise, perhaps heading for a majority after the war, the federal government responded to the upheaval by promising a referendum on PR for national elections (previous referendums had been initiated by citizens through the initiative process). This time a two-to-one majority of citizens and cantons voted in favour of the switch.[38]

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[35] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 141. In 1908 the Social Democrats gained 18% of the popular vote but just 4% of the parliamentary seats, while in 1911 they secured 20% of the vote but only 9% of the seats. Only in 1914 did their popular vote and seat total resemble each other.

[36] Lutz, "Switzerland: Introducing Proportional Representation from Below," 286.

[37] Heinz K. Meier, "The Swiss National General Strike of November 1918," in Schmitt (ed.), *Neutral Europe between War and Revolution 1917-23*, 78, 81. Though general strike was rooted primarily in domestic political concerns, conservative elites were convinced it was revolutionary in character and responded with a mixture of repression and reform, sending strike leaders to jail but then agreeing to send strike demands for PR to a referendum.

[38] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 141; Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets*, 155. Steinberg notes that the federal government had promised a referendum on PR before the 1914 election but as the election results effectively marginalized the left they felt free to stall. One effect of this decision was to move even party-oriented members of the left, including Socialist Party and trade union elites, to support direct action approaches like the political strike, a shift that helped give rise to the general strike in the fall of 1918. See Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?* 55-9. However, not everyone agrees that left activism moved the reform process decisively. Lutz claims that no single factor can be credited with moving the adoption of PR in Switzerland yet in his own account he carefully outlines how it was only when the left appeared threatening that the entrenched opposition to reform gave way. See Lutz, "Switzerland: Introducing Proportional Representation from Below," 286-7, 290, 292.

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In Denmark, another neutral country, the switch from a semi-proportional to fully proportional voting system in 1920 was, according to one Danish scholar, the result of "fairly violent and bitter struggles between political parties," while another expert credits the larger social upheaval of the period in fueling reform.[39] Between 1917 and 1920 Denmark was gripped by the same social and labour revolt sweeping most of Europe, fueled by deteriorating social conditions since 1916. The moderate Social Democrats who had participated in or supported Radical governments since 1913 now faced an unprecedented challenge from their members and voters to break with their policy of supporting a "civic truce" between the parties during the war.[40] Meanwhile, the right resented both the maintenance of wartime government intervention in the economy after the war and the 1918 re-election of the coalition Radical-Social Democratic government responsible for these nascent welfare state policies.[41] As postwar conditions worsened in 1919 and 1920, and reactionary nationalist and bourgeois forces attempted to reverse the democratic gains of earlier decades, the Social Democrats shifted gears, sponsoring a general strike.[42] In the face of considerable unity on the left in defence of the democratic parliamentary regime, the bourgeois forces retreated and sought instead institutional reforms. At this point, the Liberals dropped their objections to full PR, which since 1916 had the support of the Conservatives, Radicals and the formerly indifferent Social Democrats as well.[43] However, the Conservatives and Liberals insisted that the new voting system be entrenched constitutionally, making it very hard to change even if the left were to gain a majority of the popular vote.[44]

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[39] Johansen, "Denmark," 56; Elkit, "The Best of Both Worlds?," 195.

[40] Carol Gold, "Denmark, 1918," in Schmitt (ed.), Neutral Europe between War and Revolution 1917-23, 89-95.

[41] Due-Nielsen, "Denmark and the First World War," 16-7.

[42] Christiansen, "Reformism within Danish Social Democracy," 307-9; Miller, Government and Politics in Denmark, 37; Gold, "Denmark, 1918," 105-8.

[43] Miller, Friends and Rivals, 13-15.

[44] Johansen, "Denmark," 33; De Faramond, "The Nordic Countries," 198.

The other two neutral countries in western Europe, Sweden and Belgium, were also affected by the continental left revolt, though with different results. Both had previously introduced PR as a means of dividing the opponents to conservative rule and limiting the emergent left, while maintaining limited or plural suffrages or powerful upper houses to stem the push for democracy. But as the postwar labour upheaval swept Europe they too were forced to concede reform, though tellingly no effort was made to remove PR. Sweden introduced PR in 1909 but did not grant complete parliamentary control of the executive, particularly when a Liberal administration was in power. An increasingly assertive King had installed a Conservative regime shortly after the start of the war but the continuing agitation for democracy and the economic privations caused by the wartime interruption of shipping (particularly from 1916 on) fuelled social and labour radicalism. Conditions had deteriorated so much by 1917 that the Conservatives were forced to resign. The resulting election returned a Liberal-Socialist majority, and the King was forced to accept them though he still refused to recognize parliamentary supremacy. It was only when news came that the monarchy could not be saved in Germany, and a near revolutionary situation had emerged in the Swedish streets, that the King relented and renounced his power to actively interfere with policy, allowing the SDP-Liberal coalition government to assume full control.[45]

Belgium also already had a form of limited PR, passed at the end of the last century under pressure from the left.[46] The new rules allowed for some breaks in the party system, with the more socially-minded Catholics breaking away from the

[45] Berman, *The Social Democratic Moment*, 118-20; Carl-Goran Andrae, "The Swedish Labor Movement and the 1917-1918 Revolution," in Steven Koblik (ed.), *Sweden's Development from Poverty to Affluence 1750-1970*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 232-53; Verney, *Parliamentary Reform in Sweden*, 209.

[46] Ernest Mahaim, "Proportional Representation and the Debates upon the Electoral Question in Belgium," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 15:3 (May 1900), 396.

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government to work with the Socialists on reform issues.[47] Still, the maintenance of plural voting and a less-than-proportional design of the electoral system had led to highly undemocratic results. Before the war, the left had returned to direct action as a means of forcing the pace of democratic reform, marshalling a general strike in 1913 that elicited a government promise to improve the franchise.[48] But the arrival of German troops cut short further developments. The four-year German occupation devastated the country economically and fuelled pre-existing grievances based on language and territory. At the war's end, 80% of the labour force was unemployed and most of the nation's resources were either destroyed or carted off to Germany. Such widespread social and economic carnage forced a caretaker Catholic-led government to grant democratic reforms, conceding full male suffrage in the spring of 1919.[49] Furthermore, the sheer scale of the destruction forced the government to actively intervene in rebuilding the country and the economy, facilitating further union recognition and the adoption of social programs.[50] As it became clear that Belgium would get far less for its wartime suffering out of the Paris Peace Conference negotiations than it had anticipated, the traditional elites began to worry about their future electoral standing with a mass electorate.[51] In October 1919 they decided to hedge their bets by shifting from a semi-proportional to a fully proportional voting system, which was later inscribed in the constitution.[52] In the end, the left in

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[47] John Fitzmaurice, *The Politics of Belgium*, (London: C. Hurst, 1983), 33; Verkade, *Democratic Parties in the Low Countries and Germany*, 31.

[48] Verkade, *Democratic Parties in the Low Countries and Germany*, 33; Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 55.

[49] John Fitzmaurice, *The Politics of Belgium*, 35-6; Sally Marks, *Innocents Abroad*, 86-7, 171-83. Concern for social peace moved the monarch to force the pace of reform and depart from strict constitutionalism in expanding the franchise. Though some Conservatives complained, others approved of the breach to help stem the influence of revolution from abroad. See Val Lorwin, "Belgium: Religion, Class and Language in National Politics," in Robert Dahl (ed.), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*, (New Haven: Yale, 1966), 158; Hans A. Schmitt, "Violated Neutrals: Belgium, the Dwarf States, and Luxemburg," in Schmitt (ed.), *Neutral Europe between War and Revolution 1917-23*, 207.

[50] Andre Mommen, *The Belgian Economy in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 3-8.

[51] Marks, *Innocents Abroad*, 135-6, 204-5, 338.

[52] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 56.

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Belgium would make only modest gains in the inter-war period, but for a time in 1919 elites there feared they were set to roll over the country.[53] Thus Belgium and Sweden conform to larger European trends where social revolt aided democratization, though the combination of institutional reforms differed because PR had come earlier.

Italy and France

Reaction to the international social upheaval emerging from the war took different forms in the victorious countries. Italy emerged a victor from the war amid deep divisions about its participation in the conflict and the country's political future.[54] Alone amongst warring western powers in Europe, Italy's left had refused to join the patriotic consensus and managed to continue opposing it throughout, with little discernable political cost.[55] They emerged from the war militant in their desire to overthrow capitalism and the Liberal elites that controlled Italian politics.[56] On the right, the war stoked imperial ambitions, encouraging a romantic revival of dreams for a greater Italy that would be gained mostly at the territorial expense of Yugoslavia, Austria and Albania.[57] In the middle, various centrist members of the ruling Liberals attempted to pull together some kind of compromise between a rising working class, rural militants,

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[53] Collier, Paths Toward Democracy, 90. As in other countries on the continent, important elements of the traditional Belgian elites, particularly Catholics, remained unconvinced of the merits of democratic government in the inter-war period, a sentiment that only increased with crises of the 1930s. Thus the democratic bargain extracted during the upheaval immediately following the war could hardly been seen as fixed or beyond reversal. See Martin Conway, "Building the Christian City: Catholics and Politics in Inter-war Francophone Belgium," Past and Present, 128 (August 1990), 117-151. For postwar election results see Verkade, Democratic Parties in the Low Countries and Germany, 91.

[54] Paul Corner and Giovanna Procacci, "The Italian experience of 'total' mobilization 1915-1920," in John Horne (ed.), State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 229-34.

[55] Though Miller notes that the left did face some repression from the state, it hardly compares with the actions of other belligerent states. See James Miller, From Elite to Mass Politics: Italian Socialism in the Giolittian Era, 1900-1914, (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1990), 205-6. By contrast, Procacci argues that the Italian government entered the war without an electoral mandate, divided amongst themselves about the proper course of action, and that this created space for opposition to it from socialists and others. See Procacci, "Popular protest and labour conflict in Italy, 1915-18," 34.

[56] Eley, Forging Democracy, 170.

[57] Macmillan, Paris 1919, 285, 289-91, 293-5.

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Catholics, more right-wing Liberals, nationalists and others but with little success, especially given their strong connections to business. Franchise reform emerged as one response to the social challenges coming from both left and right as the government essentially extended the 1912 reforms to full male suffrage.[58] But later, after a particularly unstable month of strikes and work occupations, and amid disagreement amongst ruling Liberals, the government adopted PR in August 1919.

The pattern of reform in Italy was influenced by its distinctive party system and economic development, as well as the postwar upheaval. Divided between a rural, quasi-feudal south and an emerging industrial north, the dominant Liberal party typically enjoyed a super-majority because it controlled most southern seats through patronage and clientelist practices and could also win seats in the more competitive north. Landlords essentially ran their rural domains like independent fiefdoms while the Liberals operated at the national level, furthering business, trade and urban development in the north.[59] At the start of the twentieth century the Liberals debated opening the franchise to the burgeoning working class, and some argued that the party could capture these new voters just as Liberals had in Britain.[60] But others worried that franchise reform would only fuel the left and in a bill under consideration in 1910 called for the inclusion of PR to apply to urban areas of the north where labour was strong.[61] However, when the franchise was finally opened somewhat to working men in 1912, all mention of PR had been omitted, reflecting what would become lingering divisions within the Liberal party about the reform.

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[58] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 110-11, 117; Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 154-5.
[59] Miller, *From Elite to Mass Politics*, 3-5; Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 24-5; Ruescheneyer *et al*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 103-4.
[60] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 25-7.
[61] Ullrich, "Historiography, Sources and Methods for the Study of Electortal Laws in Italy," in Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms: Origins of Voting Systems in Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 314, 321-2.

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Before the war socialists and the emerging Catholic political forces had called for a host of democratic reforms, including full suffrage, an end to corruption in elections (particularly in the south), and PR. Liberals were less concerned as the prime beneficiaries of the status quo.[62] But as left fortunes rose during the war various factions within the Liberals began to reconsider.[63] Union strength jumped in Italy from 350,000 in 1914 to over 800,000 in 1919, while rural organizing by the left was also very successful.[64] By the end of the war Italy bordered on a near revolutionary situation across the north as the left was strong in both rural or urban locales. Unions and the Socialist party organized strikes, demonstrations, and direct action interventions against increases in food prices in urban areas, and land occupations, marches and rallies in rural areas. Rural landlords felt they were under a state of siege while urban elites thought revolution was imminent.[65] But Liberals were still split on how to respond, depending on whether their base of power was in the north or south. Northern Liberals feared competition from such an energized and organized left and thought PR might be an appeasing reform. But Liberals from the south worried that any change to the voting system might interfere with their clientelist networks, the source of their power.[66] Events soon overtook the last resistance. By June 1919 the country was paralyzed by strikes and occupations protesting cost of living increases.[67] Anti-socialist gangs trucked in from the south raised the level of violence and left/right street-fighting became common. At the same time, Italy suffered a serious setback at the Paris Peace Conference when the great powers refused its

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[62] Miller, *From Elite to Mass Politics*, 26, 126-7.

[63] Gaetano Salvemini, *The Origins of Fascism in Italy*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 224-5.

[64] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 49. Davis points out that farm-workers had been amongst the first to organize a union federation (in 1901) and comprised 48% of the total CGIL membership in 1914. See John A. Davis, "Socialism and the Working Class in Italy Before 1914," in D. Geary (ed.), *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe Before 1914*, 213.

[65] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 170-1.

[66] Ullrich, "Historiography, Sources and Methods for the Study of Electoral Laws in Italy," 325-6.

[67] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 171.

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territorial claims, leading to the resignation of Liberal Prime Minister Orlando.[68] The old PM had disliked PR and though he promised to introduce it under pressure from the Socialists, left-liberals and Catholics, he stalled repeatedly. The new Liberal PM was more closely tied to the Catholic political forces for support and he moved quickly to introduce it just two months after taking over.[69] However, when the Catholics and Socialists made remarkable headway in the snap election called a month later, mostly at the expense of the Liberals, critics of PR within the dominant party began complaining again. Yet given the new electoral strength of the centre-left, repeal of the new voting system appeared unlikely. [70]

On the surface, France appeared much like the rest of Europe in the aftermath of war. As the initial sense of relief at the end of hostilities gave way, social and labour demands mounted, giving rise to demonstrations, occupations and strikes. Throughout the spring of 1919 French leaders worried about the influence of Bolshevism and events in neighbouring countries.[71] As elsewhere, French Socialists had made an impressive breakthrough just prior to the war, jumping from 68 members of the lower house in 1910 to 103 in 1914. As the first postwar election approached, centre-right opinion focused on the threat from the left.[72] But the underlying social and political structure of France would prove more resilient to challenge from the left and organized labour and more quickly recover than Italy or the smaller European nations. Compared to the rest of the continent, French elites, particularly business, were more united, while France's left, its

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[68] H. James Burgwynm, *The Legend of the Mutilated Victory: Italy, the Great War, and the Paris Peace Conference, 1915-1919,* (Westport: Greenwood, 1993), 313-8.

[69] Christopher Seton-Watson, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism 1870-1925,* (London: Methuen, 1967), 536, 547; Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe,* 114-7. Though as Ulrich points out, he too had a *volte face* on the issue. See Ulrich, "Historiography, Sources and Methods for the Study of Electoral Laws in Italy," 326.

[70] Ulrich, "Historiography, Sources and Methods for the Study of Electoral Laws in Italy," 328.

[71] Herbert Tint, *France Since 1918,* (London: B.T. Basford, 1970), 10-12; Anthony Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery: France's Bid for Power in Europe 1914-1940,* (London: Arnold, 1995), 68-9; Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe,* 77-8.

[72] Anderson, *Conservative Politics in France,* 194-5; Martin, *France and the Apres Guerre,* 51; McMillan, *Twentieth Century France,* 81-2, 86.

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unions and its parties, were more divided. The postwar upheaval would see some concessions made - the eight-hour day, a new voting system - but the shift back to the right would come earlier than elsewhere on the continent.[73]

Since before the war, Socialists, Conservatives and Moderates had all called for a switch from France's double ballot majority system to PR.[74] Ever since the rise of organized labour and Socialist parties in the 1890s began shifting the party system away from its republican/monarchist axis toward religious and economic questions, one party - the Radicals - tended to dominate politics, making deals with both the left and right.[75] Essentially, the centrist Radicals would make alliances for second ballot support with socialists on anti-clerical grounds in regions where the latter were strong, and with right-wingers and more religious conservatives on an anti-socialist basis where conservatives had strength.[76] Not surprisingly, neither left or right were happy with the situation and occasionally their frustration with the Radicals led them to work together electorally to defeat Radical candidates, despite their hostility to one another.[77] The continued need for these kinds of 'immoral bargains' fuelled support for PR. But party deal-making was not the only issue pushing reform. Conservatives wanted PR to slow the growth of the socialists and buttress religious forces in the lower house. Socialists and Moderates wanted PR to bolster their representation and aid party-building.[78] More generally, the majority system was held responsible for a host of problems ranging from government instability, corruption and a locally-dominated political culture.[79] Certainly the period

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[73] Roger Magraw, "Paris 1917-20: Labour Protest and Popular Politics," in Wrigley (ed.), *Challenges of Labour*, 136-8; Horne, "The State and the Challenge of Labour in France 1917-20," 247-51; Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 77-8.
[74] Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections*, 85, 89; Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 178.
[75] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 30-1.
[76] Goldey and Williams, "France," 65.
[77] Goldey and Williams, "France," 68-9.
[78] Goldey and Williams, "France," 69.
[79] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 97.

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just preceding the war appeared damning. Between 1910 and 1914, ten different administrations attempted to govern the country.[80] On two occasions before the war a legislative majority backed voting system reform but these efforts were successfully blocked by Radicals and more rurally-based Conservatives in the Senate.[81]

The mobilization of the left and organized labour emerging from the war pushed voting system reform back onto the agenda. Efforts to change the system before had failed but the spike in socialist support in 1914, combined with the social upheaval coming out of the war, made the issue more urgent. But the left were not strong enough to demand or inspire a switch to a fully proportional system.[82] The war had not overcome the historical divisions between Socialists and the syndicalist labour movement that had made them one of the weakest left parties in Europe.[83] Nor could the French left draw on disgruntled agrarian labour as the German and Italian left did because the peasantry in France were largely independent and conservative.[84] By contrast, the centre-right emerged from the war in better shape than their counterparts on the continent. They had won the war and could focus public dissatisfaction on Germany and the promise of reparations.[85] Uncertainty about the strength of the left did fuel interest in voting system reform, but mostly because it might alter conventional deal-making at election time. French elites had considerable experience in managing competitive mass elections, unlike most of continental Europe. However, given that traditional methods of manipulating the results were slowly being eliminated - the 1914 election was arguably the first to make

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[80] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 117-8.

[81] Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections*, 86, 90-1.

[82] Kathryn E. Amdur, *Syndicalist Legacy: Trade Unions and Politics in Two French Cities in the Era of World War I*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 263-4; Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 52.

[83] Kendall, *The Labour Movement in Europe*, 37; McMillan, *Twentieth Century France*, 28-9; Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 64, 85; Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 14.

[84] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 47. Though the left had important pockets of support in rural and semi-rural areas. See McGraw, "Socialism, Syndicalism and French Labour Before 1914," 82-3.

[85] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 134.

secret balloting effective - there was concern.[86] In light of this postwar shift, a key group of centre-right politicians were keen to form a Bloc Nationale that could mobilize anti-Socialist votes while marginalizing the clerical issue. Voting system reform would become a key part of their efforts.[87] When reform finally came late in 1919, France adopted a highly disproportional hybrid system that rewarded parties that could make effective alliances over those that did not.[88] Given that the Socialists, under pressure from their militants, had publicly eschewed electoral deal-making with the Radicals, the design was clearly aimed to work against them. Though described by some commentators as a compromise between Socialists and Radicals, centre-right politicians had been the key players in its design and would become the main beneficiaries in its first trial.[89]

Anglo-American countries

Just across the English Channel postwar politics shaped up very differently than on the continent. The war did lead to a mobilization of labour and civil society, just as in Europe. The political arm of the left, the Labour party, did appear to be on the rise, set to benefit from wartime discontents and an extension of the suffrage to all working men. And the conventional party system was in disarray, with a rump of the once-governing Liberals in opposition, while a war-time coalition of Liberals, Labour party members and Conservatives held power. The war had led to serious splits in all the parties, whether over war itself, the prosecution of the war, or how to respond to the increasing demands

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[86] Roy Pierce, "French Legislative Elections: The Historical Background," 2; Goldey and Williams, "France," 63.

[87] Martin, France and the Apres Guerre, 49-52; Bernard and Dubief, The Decline of the Third Republic, 1914-1938, 86; Mair, Recasting Bourgeois Europe, 92-3, 97-8.

[88] Roy Pierce, "French Legislative Elections: The Historical Background," 8. Evidence of the bias can be seen in the result for the socialist SFIO in the 1919 contest. Running without a deal with the Radicals, the socialists gained 23% of the popular vote but only 11% of the parliamentary seats. See Geary, "Paris 1917-20," 135.

[89] Bernard and Dubief, The Decline of the Third Republic, 1914-1938, 87. On the 'no alliances' policy see Jean Lacouture, Leon Blum, (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), 168-9.

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in Ireland for independence. When an all-party Speaker's Conference on electoral reform reported in favour of PR in 1918, the timing seemed right for reform. But British political elites had much experience with mass elections and managing splits in parliament. The votes cast for reform were close but in the end they failed. Instead of voting system reform, the political elites fashioned a different response to the threat of the left and the uncertainties of the party system with the one-time 'coupon' electoral coalition of Lloyd George Liberals and the Conservatives.

Things might easily have gone the other way. In the votes in parliament in 1918 Labour members supported PR and AV, Asquithian Liberals supported AV, while Lloyd George Liberals and the Conservatives opposed both. In the House of Lords, Conservatives supported PR both to limit the impact of the franchise extension and the power of the House of Commons.[90] The government's views were influenced no doubt by holding power but also the uncertainty about which direction the political system might be headed. Everyone expected a coming political realignment, either as a progressive alliance of Labour and the Liberals, or an anti-socialist coalition of Liberals and Tories.[91] Changes to the franchise laws, extending the vote to many more working men, seemed to just about guarantee it. Lloyd George's top advisors spent much of 1918 working out different scenarios to remake the party system, either by putting their leader at the head of a united Liberal party, or an all-party coalition, or a new party altogether.[92] Either way, it meant Lloyd George had little interest in seeing any of his potential vehicles limited by PR, whether by reducing the incentives for his opponents to work with him or limiting the mandate his party could receive.[93] Negotiations with other

[90] Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace 1906-18*, 156.
[91] V. Bogdanor, "Electoral Reform and British Politics," *Electoral Studies*, 6:2 (1987), 116.
[92] Douglas, "The background to the 'Coupon' elections arrangements," 328-9.
[93] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 183-4. Lloyd George's cabinet initially tried to get the Speaker's Conference to reconsider its proposal for PR. When they refused the government submitted the bill to the house, declaring the portions it did not like - specifically PR and the women's franchise - open to free votes.

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parties began in earnest when the war suddenly turned from stalemate to impending victory over Germany in the fall of 1918. But the Prime Minister soon found that others did not want to play along. The official Liberal party refused his terms for re-entering their ranks (essentially that he become leader of the Liberals and remain PM). They assumed that despite Lloyd George's famous name and strong public identification with winning the war, he could not win anything without a proper electoral organization, which he lacked. Labour soon quit the government to run alone - they had no interest in all-party government under a wartime PM.[94] Previous efforts to hive off supporters from other parties to form a new Lloyd George venture had failed.[95] This left only the Conservatives, with whom Lloyd George's lieutenants quickly formed a pact for the coming election. The pact eliminated the pressure for voting system reform by essentially postponing the realignment of the party system.

It is hard to say what might have happened if the British election had not been held so quickly after the end of the war. With the flush of victory still present, the 'coupon' election of 1918 delivered a convincing victory to the Lloyd George Liberals and their Conservative allies.[96] Still, the result was not merely reward for winning the war. Public expectations were high that the new ministry would embark on far-reaching social reform in the fields of housing and health.[97] But as labour strife engulfed Britain too in the spring and summer of 1919, and the Conservative dominated-coupon government did little to act on their promises, it became clear that the election had hardly

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[94] Douglas, "The background to the 'Coupon' elections arrangements," 330.

[95] Douglas, "The background to the 'Coupon' elections arrangements," 325.

[96] Adelman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party*, 26-7.

[97] Philip Abrams, "The Failure of Social Reform," *Past and Present*, 24 (April 1963), 43-4, 49. Mayer notes that Lloyd George campaigned on vague promises of "housing, better wages and better working conditions" to attract working class votes but offered more concrete promises to the Conservatives in private. See Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking*, 138.

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represented much of a 'consensus.'[98] Yet the government now had a renewed mandate, as long as it could hold its coalition together, while the opposition Labour and independent Liberals were unsure whether this represented a new party or a stalling tactic by Lloyd George.[99] Hedging their bets, when PR came back to a vote in the House of Commons in 1920 Labour again overwhelming supported the change and this time 80% of independent Liberals did too, though this bid for reform was also unsuccessful.[100] While there had been much talk about electoral reform during the war, and PR had support from most of Labour, a good many Liberals, as well as Conservatives from the House of Lords, it never became a priority for a sitting government. Labour's full suffrage breakthrough in 1918 was modest, independent Liberals could not overcome the advantages of the 'coupon' for coalition Liberals, and the Conservatives - in the House of Commons anyway - were satisfied with coalition rather than voting system reform to limit Labour, their Liberal opponents and the democratic flood. Though Liberal and Conservative elites were concerned about the rise of Labour and the increase in direct action by organized labour in the years after the war, they pursued a number of number of potential responses to

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[98] Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking*, 603. The character of the labour revolt in Britain in 1919 and the 'coupon' government's mostly conservative response to it is explored in Chris Wrigley, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

[99] However, the official Liberal party's hostility to Lloyd George and his coalition Liberals did much to fuel to uncertainty effectively cutting off the latter's retreat back into the party. Throughout most of 1919 Lloyd George tried to establish the basis for a new 'centre' party that would combine his Liberals with the Conservatives into a powerful anti-socialist bloc but that plan was rejected by his own followers, as it would have been by most Conservatives party members as well. See Adelman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party*, 28-9; Cowling, *The Impact of Labour, 1920-1924*, 94-6, 113-4.

[100] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 213-4; Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 196. The bill was sponsored by an Independent Liberal MP. Perhaps as an indication of the precariousness of their position, over half of the Coalition Liberals also supported the initiative.

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them.[101] It appeared that despite their differences, the elites of the traditional ruling parties were not as easily panicked as their counterparts on the continent.[102]

Though cautious at home, Britain confidently introduced voting system reform abroad for colonial possessions like India and Malta, and as a strategic move against nationalists in Ireland. In India and Malta, PR either eased colonial rule (by dividing Britain's opponents or offering locals some influence on government) or aided in establishing home rule (thus lessening British commitments).[103] In Ireland, the introduction of PR for local elections in 1919, and for both the Northern and Southern Irish Parliaments in 1920, was a direct response to the rise of the nationalist Sinn Fein.[104] The quest for Irish home rule had long divided British politics, leading to a realignment of the party system in the late nineteenth century.[105] The reformist Liberals elected in 1906 had promised to act but repeatedly stalled passage of home rule bills, the latest in 1914. When Britain executed the leaders of the failed Easter Rebellion in 1916, they only fanned the flames of rising wartime nationalism. In the 1918 British general election Sinn Fein wiped out the old Irish parliamentary party and then refused to take their seats.[106] The nationalists had been gradually taking over practical control of the country in the south since the beginning of the war by organizing food committees, employment

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[101] Cowling notes that many at the time could see that Labour's modest result in 1918 had more to do with the low turnout and bad timing of the election (bad for Labour, good for the Coalition) than their potential levels of support. See Maurice Cowling, *The Impact of Labour 1920-1924*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 25.

[102] Here discourse mattered. Though Britain and other Anglo-American locales witnessed a high degree of social upheaval following the war, the political manifestation of the 'labour revolt' in labourism meant that it did not draw as readily on the threatening overtones that socialism did in Europe, no matter how pragmatic and constitutional the latter actually were in practice (particularly in postwar Germany). This would become only too clear in British Labour's timid responses to the 1926 general strike, where the party was concerned to underline its commitment to the constitution. See John Saville, "Labourism and the Labour Government," in D. Coates (ed.), *Paving the Third Way: The Critique of Parliamentary Socialism*, 87.

[103] Peter Robb, "The British Cabinet and Indian Reform 1917-1919," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 6:4 (1976), 318-34; Hoag and Hallett, *Proportional Representation*, 279.

[104] A. Mitchell, *Labour in Irish Politics 1890-1930*, (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1974), 122; Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 201.

[105] Pugh, *State and Society*, 78-9.

[106] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 202.

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and local government. British over-reaction to the Easter Rebellion and an attempt to conscript the Irish for war only furthered nationalist support. By the war's end a classic dual power situation existed as the British attempted to exercise control over the official channels of government while Sinn Fein effectively governed at the local level, with the overwhelming support of the population.[107] In line with emerging nationalist sentiment across Europe, the nationalists declared independence in January 1919 and fought a guerilla war against Britain for the next two years. British efforts to cut into Sinn Fein support by implementing PR for local elections in 1919 and the two assemblies established in 1920 failed to stem the nationalist drive to independence. In the 1921 election for the southern parliament Sinn Fein won every seat uncontested and the British finally agreed to negotiate.[108]

The social upheaval that flowed out of the war was not restricted to Europe and British Isles. British dominions like Australia, New Zealand and Canada also faced an upsurge in labour militancy and strikes, compounded by a poorly organized demobilization of soldiers. By the spring of 1919, all three countries were in the grip of an unprecedented labour revolt. In Australia the wartime National government had already reformed the voting system, introducing the majoritarian alternative vote late in 1918. Faced with an emerging farmers' party drawing from the same vote pool as National, and a resurgent Labour party easily gaining 40-45% of the poll, AV promised to handle what the government thought might a temporary foray of agricultural interests into politics. PR, on the other hand, might only entrench them. Labour, keen to return to power in a majority government, were not interested in PR either.[109] In New Zealand, Labour finally emerged as a political force in 1918, both in terms of elections and direct

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[107] David Fitzpatrick, "The Geography of Irish Nationalism," *Past and Present*, 78 (October 1977), 125-6, 130-1; Mitchell, *Labour in Irish Politics*, 86-7.

[108] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 203-05; Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 202.

[109] Graham, "The Choice of Voting Methods in Federal Politics," 274-5.

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action. Partly in response to Labour and the social instability, parliament returned to the question of PR in 1919 but declined to adopt (though only by a narrow margin).[110] Of the dominions, Canada led the way in its consideration of PR after the war, at least at the sub-national level, a surprising development given that both union density and labour party organization were much weaker than New Zealand and Australia. At its peak in 1920, voting system reform was seriously considered in four Canadian provinces and promoted by three of the four active federal political parties.[111]

Efforts to reform Canadian voting systems picked up speed during the war as part of a larger political reform movement. A smattering of towns across Western Canada adopted PR by 1918, largely through the efforts of dogged local activists, and farmers and organized labour declared their support for its application to provincial and federal elections. But little had been accomplished before the outbreak of labour and soldier militancy in the spring of 1919.[112] As in Europe, the war fuelled a more considerable organization of civil society, strengthening farmers' movements and organized labour. Union membership increased dramatically with the demands of war production. And labour began moving left, first to embrace political action by a labour party, and then to support direct action to achieve labour's goals.[113] At the same time, Canada's farmers moved decisively to form their own political organization and run candidates in federal

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[110] Jackson and McRobie, *New Zealand Adopts PR*, 28-9. On the formation of the second Labour party, see Jack Vowles, "Ideology and the Formation of the New Zealand Labour Party: Some New Evidence," *New Zealand Journal of History*, 16:1 (April 1982), 39-55.

[111] Pilon, "Proportional Representation in Canada: An Historical Sketch," 16-7, 20-2. For party platforms see C. Stacey, *Historical Documents of Canada*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1972), 36, 40.

[112] This period is reviewed in detail in chapter two, "The Limits of Reform, 1915-17," of D. Pilon, "The Drive for Proportional Representation in British Columbia," 26-56.

[113] G. Kealey and D. Cruikshank, "Strikes in Canada, 1891-1950," in G. Kealey, *Workers and Canadian History*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 368-71; Heron, "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class," 369. For more general background see C. Heron, *The Canadian Labour Movements, A Short History*, (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1989); M. Robin, *Radical Politics and Canadian Labour*, (Kingston: Industrial Relations Centre - Queen's University, 1968); and James Naylor, *The New Democracy*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

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and provincial elections.[114] Yet it was only when the Winnipeg General Strike broke out in March 1919, sparking similar efforts across the west, that conventional political elites began to pay attention, calling for reforms that might help represent the 'reasonable labour man.' Suddenly PR was embraced by worried business leaders and daily newspapers in several important locales. In Winnipeg, after an impressive showing by Labour in the civic election following the strike, the business-led Winnipeg Citizens League urged the province to introduce PR.[115] The government quickly adopted PR for both city council elections and urban constituencies in provincial elections to minimize Labour's impact.

In other provinces farmers were a much greater threat to the status quo, though labour was an important ally. In Ontario in 1919 and Alberta in 1920 farmer parties won power promising democratic reform, including PR. At the federal level, the party system was in disarray with both major parties unsure of their status. The federal Liberals, split during the war over conscription and now facing challenges to their traditional voting base from farmers and labour, turned to PR as a means of hedging their bets, adopting it as policy at their first federal convention in 1919.[116] The Union government was not sure if it would carry on or split into its former parties. With farmers winning by-elections in 1919 and 1920, and labour militancy on the rise, Union Liberals joined their former party members in supporting a committee vote endorsing the majoritarian alternative vote in 1921.[117] With an election due soon, reform appeared promising as no less than three of the four political groups that would compete endorsed some form of voting system change.

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[114] J. Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review 1919*, (Toronto: Canadian Annual Review Limited, 1920), 382-9.

[115] J. Johnston and M. Koene, "Learning History's Lessons Anew: The Use of STV in Canadian Municipal Elections," in Bowler and Grofman (eds.), *Elections in Australia, Ireland, and Malta Under the Single Transferable Vote*, 213.

[116] Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada," 135-6.

[117] Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada," 165-6

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The novel conditions of the new 'total war' inaugurated by World War I shifted the balance of power in western societies, discrediting traditional ruling elites as they were held largely responsible for the carnage, while buttressing and expanding the organization of civil society, particularly organized labour. With peace a new kind of war broke out, largely defined by class, as disgruntled civilians, disoriented soldiers, and more confident labour movements and left parties began making demands. Though motivated by bread and butter issues like jobs and living standards, the postwar social upheaval was also infused by desires for democracy, socialism and national self-determination. The Russian revolution had multiple readings, heralding the end of the traditional conservative regimes of Europe, representing the possibility of change toward a more egalitarian society, and demonstrating the practicality of forcibly changing government. The Soviets inspired the left and labour movements in the west, motivated nationalist movements in the east and Ireland, and frightened conventional elites everywhere. The Soviet example of revolution, combined with the surge of left and labour militancy across western societies, shifted the overall public discourse solidly toward democracy and social change, forcing the right to make concessions to head off what appeared to be worse alternatives. But democratic concessions came at a price - voting system reform. The adoption of various forms of PR was understood by the right as kind of conservative insurance against democracy aimed at limiting the left. By 1921, every country in Europe had adopted some form of PR. Each country came to the reform by a slightly different route, reflecting differences in class and cleavage structures, political party development, and the specific historical interactions between the two.

Outside Europe, voting system reforms were also widely considered but ultimately less successful, reflecting different patterns of class compromise and greater elite experience with democratic or quasi-democratic forms of managing social disputes.

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In the United States very modest concessions made to organized labour near the war's end were accompanied by a state-sponsored 'red scare' that effectively criminalized and crippled the left. American elites were unencumbered by the divisions that plagued their European counterparts, and American society was much less affected by the war and war-induced shortages than other warring nations. Though Americans workers did prove militant in the immediate postwar period, just as in Europe, the American state and its political class were less divided and more experienced in marginalizing class dissent.[118] Most importantly, neither labour nor the left managed to form a viable political party in the US, one reason voting system reform never became an issue there. National elites amongst the rest of the victorious powers may have admired the American response to the challenge, but they were not in a position to reproduce it. Other English-speaking countries like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand struggled to find a response to labour and soldier discontent, while in Britain an expansion of the franchise made the Labour party more competitive and threatening.[119] In Europe war victors France and Italy also witnessed a rise of labour militancy and uncertainty about political brokering. But for varying reasons, voting system reform in the victorious nations enjoyed less consensus than elsewhere, proving at best temporary in some locales or rejected without trial in others.

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[118] American labour experience in this period is ably summarized in D. Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), chapter 8, "This great struggle for democracy." On the 'exceptionalism' of the American ruling class see Kim Voss, *The Making of American Exceptionalism: The Knights of Labor and Class Formation in the Nineteenth Century*, (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Sanford Jacoby, *Masters to Managers: Historical and Comparative Persepectives on American Employers*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[119] Though social upheaval was a concern in Britain too; see Hinton, *Labour and Socialism*, 109-16; and Cowling, *The Impact of Labour, 1920-1924*, 21, 25-6, 43-4

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Section II: Conservative resurgence and the slow decline of PR 1922-39

For most western countries, satisfying the minimum conditions for democratic rule - at least full male suffrage, responsible government, free and fair elections - coincided with the outbreak of the most serious social upheavals of the new century. Between 1917 and 1921 Germany, Finland and Sweden would gain responsible government, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Britain would expand voting to full male suffrage, and France and Switzerland would address election improprieties. But these accomplishments were not merely responses to new public demands - these specific changes had been long sought after. Instead, the shift to a minimal form of democracy was defensive in nature, designed to head off and limit more thoroughgoing social, economic and political demands. The war had altered the fundamental trajectory of the left, and started to shift public thinking more generally, away from a bias for local provision of services to a more national orientation. Some thought this would require revolution to see through but for many others democracy would suffice. Of the many voices scrambling to be heard above the tumult there were numerous, sometimes conflicting, proposals for social change, most reformist in nature. But as Geoff Eley notes, it was the undercurrent of rebellion at home along with the spectre of revolution from abroad that ultimately forced democratic concessions from the political status quo in most countries at this particular historical juncture.[120]

However, it must be underlined that these concessions did not represent any serious recognition of public or labour demands coming out of the war by traditional elites, particularly as concerned substantive social policy, as much as a shift in the terrain upon which they would be fought against. As became clear in the 1920s, the powerful in all nations had no intention of surrendering their day-to-day control over most aspects of

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[120] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 156-7, 225.

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life to any publicly-driven democratic process. Yet most discovered in the immediate postwar period that to maintain their hegemony, and perhaps restore it to its former glory, would not be possible through some nineteenth century-style restoration. The new mass society could not be controlled in the same way as before. As Charles Mair notes, marginalizing the left, and the promise of substantive social policy they represented, would require a "significant institutional transformation" and "new institutional arrangements and distributions of power."[121] The adoption of PR can be seen as one of the first of these institutional changes, though it by no means exhausted the possibilities.[122]

In the years that followed PR would be judged by how well it acted as a form of 'conservative insurance' against democracy. Where PR succeeded it remained as a 'condensation' of class forces embedding in the institutions of the state. Left support was rising in most Scandinavian countries in the 1920s making them the most popular party and easily a majority-government winner in a first-past-the-post system. PR either kept them from power or severely limited what they could do as minority governments. Where PR was not required it was eliminated. The French left were organizationally weak in the 1920s and little threat to the centre-right parties. Though they re-established their election-only alliance with the Radicals in 1924 and defeated the right, their weakness meant they had little influence on the government. Faced with crippling competition from the Communists on the left, and an indifferent partner on the right, the

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[121] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 8-9.

[122] Other responses included the rise of business-funded anti-socialist leagues that produced millions of leaflets and broad-sheets for public consumption, a dramatic increase in national business organizations like employers and trade associations with a social or public focus, and more direct links between business funding for anti-socialist politicians, as well as pressure for centre-right parties to mimic the organization of left mass parties. See Chris Wrigley, "The State and the Challenge of Labour in Britain 1917-20," in C. Wrigley (ed.), *Challenges of Labour*, 280-4; Martin Kitchen, *The Political Economy of Germany 1815-1914*, 256; A.J. Heidenheimer and F.C. Langdon, *Business Associations and the Financing of Political Parties: A Comparative Study of the Evolution Practices in Germany, Norway and Japan*, (The Hague: Martinus Jijhoff, 1968), 23-7; Verkade, *Democratic Parties in the Low Countries and Germany*, 31-3.

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socialists finally agreed to Radical proposals for a return to the France's status quo approach to voting, the Second Ballot.[123] As a result France's semi-proportional voting system was repealed in 1927. And where PR failed, either in limiting the left or providing for a clear right-wing alternative, democracy itself was often sacrificed. Germany and Italy's traditional elites had great difficulty adapting to a democratic brokering of convention and dissent, and PR - with its mathematically precise representation of political pluralism - only made things worse.[124] Though the left in both countries were severely limited in pressing their own agenda, the right felt unable to recapture control democratically. In the end, both PR and democracy were jettisoned.

The great era of voting system reform between 1915 and 1920 has tended to overshadow significant developments in the years following. These include repeals of PR in Italy, France, Australia and Northern Ireland, failed efforts to adopt PR and AV in Britain and Canada, and a notable shift in left thinking on the desirability of PR as a democratic reform.

Anglo-American countries

Despite considerable discussion, Anglo-American jurisdictions did not follow postwar Europe in shifting to new voting systems, at least at the national level. The one arguably successful adoption of PR in the inter-war period occurred with the emergence of the new Irish Free State in 1922, though in reality this just extended the system the British had applied to the discredited Northern and Southern parliaments in 1920. The

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[123] Tint, *France Since 1918*, 21-8; Keiger, *Raymond Poincare*, 306. The right toyed with changing the voting system in 1923 when they realized that the Socialists and Radicals were patching up their alliance, and again in 1931. See Martin, *France and the Apres Guerre*, 227-8; and Bernard and Dubief, *The Decline of the Third Republic*, 177. On Communist competition for the socialists and the nature of their relationship see Bernard and Dubief, *The Decline of the Third Republic*, 154-5; Louise Elliot Dalby, *Leon Blum: Evolution of a Socialist*, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1963), 213, 265-6; Lacouture, *Leon Blum*, 178-80, 184-8.

[124] David Abraham, "Conflicts Within German Industry and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," *Past and Present*, 88 (Autumn 1980), 88-128.

decision flowed from British demands in the treaty negotiations to protect Protestant voting minorities in southern Ireland.[125] Protestant voting never really registered in subsequent Irish Free State elections but PR became entrenched nonetheless due to lingering political animosities resulting from the treaty process, and the existence of a small but vocal labour party. After a brief civil war, and a long abstention from the Dail by the anti-treaty party, Irish politics normalized somewhat in the 1930s though the mutual hostility of the two main parties for one another made any attempt to change democratic rules highly suspect. When a new constitution accompanied the declaration of the Irish Republic in 1937, PR was entrenched in the constitution.[126] By contrast, PR did not fare so well in Northern Ireland where labour was stronger and better organized. Unionist forces had claimed from the outset of home rule that they would repeal PR at their first opportunity.[127] Yet they hesitated, only repealing it for local elections in 1923 and legislative elections in 1929. In both cases repeal followed a small but significant electoral breakthrough for Labour and Unionist dissidents. Some scholars argue that the switch did not hurt labour representation so much as strengthen the main unionist party by eliminating independent Protestant candidates. Nevertheless, labour members disappeared from the Northern parliament after the repeal of PR.[128]

One key factor in the fate of voting system reform in the British dominions was the emergence of a critical reappraisal of PR by its long-time champions on the left, and here European experience was instructive. PR as conservative insurance appeared to deliver results in the Scandinavian countries in the inter-war period as the left quickly

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[125] Mitchell, *Labour in Irish Politics*, 153; J.L. McCracken, *Representative Government in Ireland: A Study of Dail Eireannn 1919-48,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 67.

[126] P. McKee, "The Republic of Ireland," in V. Bogdanor and D. Butler (eds.), *Democracy and Elections: Electoral Systems and their Political Consequences,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 167.

[127] Hoag and Hallett, *Proportional Representation,* 242.

[128] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System,* 205-10. J.L. McCracken, "The Political Scene in Northern Ireland, 1926-37," as cited in Mitchell, *Labour in Irish Politics,* 125-6, footnote 57.

rose to become the dominant party in each by the late 1920s. Over time, the consensus for PR on the European left came under challenge as working class voting majorities failed to develop and bourgeois alliances kept social democrats from power. Scandinavian left parties, the largest in their parliaments by far by the mid-1920s, found themselves unable to act in government and began mooting a return to plurality voting.[129] Britain's Labour party also began moving away from its commitments on PR. As a minority government in 1923, Labour were permitted to do little with their first term in office. When the Liberals - a party that had stalled or opposed most efforts for voting system reform when they were in office - sponsored a bill for PR in 1924, Labour members were outraged and for the first time an overwhelming majority voted against any change.[130] Left parties were learning that the intransigence to their policies from bourgeois forces was deep and would not be moved by rational arguments or appeals to noble sentiments. As their opponents were prepared to use everything in their power to limit working class parties, the left could not afford to support democratic reforms on the basis of mathematical justice. In what would become an influential position paper on the left, Herman Finer argued that Labour should defend the plurality system and wait until its distortions started working in their favour. Finer and much of the Labour elite now believed that only with the clear majorities that plurality typically provided would the party be able to implement any of its program against the combined opposition of the bourgeois parties, the mainstream press and their capitalist sponsors.[131] Certainly the difficulty left parties were having in Europe under PR only reinforced their thinking.

However, Labour did nearly introduce AV during their minority government from 1929-31. Another Speakers' Conference was struck but no consensus on changing the

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[129] Verney, *Parliamentary Reform in Sweden*, 215-6.
[130] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 221-23; Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 196.
[131] Herman Finer, *The Case Against PR*, (London: Fabian Society, 1924).

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voting system could be reached amongst the parties. For a time Lloyd George privately angled for Conservative support on a PR bill instead of AV, promising Liberal votes for a Tory ministry in return, but the Conservatives remained leery of deals with their former ally. Instead, Labour decided to offer the Liberals AV in 1931 if they would sustain Labour's minority government, a deal the Liberals heartily agreed to. However, though the bill was passed in both the House and the Lords, the Labour government fell before it was dispatched to the King. The new Tory-dominated National government never mentioned it again.[132]

Britain's dominions were much influenced by developments back in the 'old county,' though in some cases the influence was reciprocal. Certainly Australian experience both with voting system reform and Labour government influenced their British counterparts.[133] Though Australia's Labour party had initially supported PR at confederation, their subsequent success in gaining office at both state and federal levels decisively shifted their thinking. When added to the fact that all subsequent voting system reform initiatives were explicitly designed to keep Labour from government, the left's newfound respect for plurality was not difficult to understand. When Labour recaptured federal power in 1914 they brushed aside their opponent's Royal Commission recommendations in favour of AV. At the state level, Labour repealed PR in New South Wales after regaining office in 1925.[134] The Canadian left took longer to rework their thinking on voting system reform. From 1919 to 1930, PR placed first on the annual list of demands made to Parliament from the national labour body. Fledgling left political groups like the Federated Labour Party, the Socialist Party of Canada, the Canadian

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[132] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 234-44.

[133] The commonwealth Labour parties were well aware of the developments concerning their counterparts in othe jurisdictions. For instance, British Labour had followed labour's efforts in New Zealand and were critical of that country's compulsory arbitration act. See H.C. Hayburn, "William Pember Reeves, the Times, and New Zealand's Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, 1906-1908," *New Zealand Journal of History*, 21:2 (October 1987), 251-269.

[134] Hughes, "STV in Australia," 160-1.

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Labour Party and the 'ginger group' of left/labour MPs in the federal parliament, particularly W.S. Woodsworth, all vigorously called for PR to do justice to working people and their issues.[135] But this also reflected the weakness of Canadian left politics and the barrier first-past-the-post seemed to represent. It was not until the 1930s that some debate about voting system reform emerged on the left, not coincidentally at the very moment that a national left party finally emerged on the federal scene.[136]

In the period between 1916 and 1923 voting systems enjoyed a fairly high level of public visibility in western Canada and Ontario. Reformers had secured a few municipal conversions to PR during the war, but the labour upheaval of 1919 boosted its consideration amongst the chattering classes and their powerful sponsors. By 1920, every major town in western Canada had adopted PR and three provinces - Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario - had undertaken to introduce it.[137] But in the economic downturn that marked the early 1920s the inflated strength of postwar labour declined significantly.[138] Where labour remained strong and organized, as in Winnipeg and Calgary, PR was introduced and remained an institutional fixture into the 1950s. But where labour's organizational strength visibly declined, as in Vancouver, Victoria, and host of smaller towns, PR was quickly repealed.[139] In Ontario farmers and their urban labour allies shocked the country in the fall of 1919 by capturing provincial power in the nation's industrial heartland. Both groups were keen to introduce PR or some hybrid PR/AV system. A Special Legislative Committee on Proportional Representation reported in

[135] Pilon, "Proportional Representation in Canada: An Historical Sketch," 30.

[136] H. Orliffe, "Proportional Representation," *Canadian Forum*, 22:205 (February 1938), 388-90. Phillips sketches out the debate over PR amongst the members of the League for Social Reconstruction, a group of left-wing intellectuals who influenced the formation of Canada's left party, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in the 1930s. See Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada," 216.

[137] D. Pilon, "The History of Voting System Reform in Canada," in H. Milner (ed.), *Making Every Vote Count: Reassessing Canada's Electoral System*, (Peterborough: Broadview, 1999), 113, 118-9, 121.

[138] B. Palmer, *Working Class Experience, Second Edition*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 219-21.

[139] Pilon, "The Drive for Proportional Representation in British Columbia," 113-4.

favour of PR for urban centres and as the governing majority supported the initiative, it should have easily passed. But the mainstream parties, determined to prevent what they thought was an anomalous multi-party legislature from becoming permanent, began filibustering the bill. In a fit of pique the inexperienced farmer premier called a snap election, which the farmers and their labour supporters lost convincingly.[140] The only other provincial reforms occurred in 1924 when Alberta introduced PR for urban areas and both Manitoba and Alberta introduced AV in the rural constituencies of their provinces to ward off challengers to the farmer parties.[141]

At the federal level, the recently reunited Liberal party, the farmer-sponsored Progressive party, and various left and labour candidates campaigned with PR as part of their election platforms in the 1921 election. When the Liberals formed a minority government with tacit support from the Progressives, reform appeared imminent. But the new Liberal Prime Minister Mackenzie King proved to be wily politician who would manage to elicit third party support with (unfulfilled) promises of voting system reforms for the next decade and half. In some ways, King's hands were tied. His Quebec contingent, the bedrock of his support, were wholly opposed to PR lest it lessen their province's pivotal role in most governments.[142] On the other hand, the forces to his left, particularly labour, were too weak to make PR a serious demand. When a motion to endorse a trial run of PR in select urban locales came before the House of Commons in 1923 King declared it a free vote and it failed. Another attempt to bring in PR in 1924 failed even more spectacularly.[143] There was a disputed voice vote on AV in 1923 that supporters claimed committed the government to introduce it. Over the next seven years King would repeatedly tempt his sometime allies and taunt his opponents claiming that

[140] Naylor, *The New Democracy*, 224, 243; Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada," 163.
[141] H. Jansen, "The Single Transferable Vote in Alberta and Manitoba," (Ph.D. dissertation: University of Alberta, 1998), 47-8, 57.
[142] Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada," 174-5, 179-80.
[143] Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada," 176, 184-5.

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the government was just about to introduce a bill to bring in majority voting, but his government never did.[144] King's promises were designed to string along his Progressive Party supporters while he wooed their best MPs back into the Liberal party or their electoral support shrank and their voters returned to the Liberal fold, a tactic that had essentially succeeded by 1930.[145]

Another round of voting system debate came out of the 1935 Canadian federal election. King, now leader of the opposition, campaigned on a promise to implement PR if elected instead of the ruling Tories.[146] As usual, King was hedging his bets in the face of considerable electoral uncertainty. A new national left party - the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) - had emerged from the depths of the depression and had made some impressive headway at the provincial level.[147] As working class voters were normally a key Liberal constituency, this development worried King and his party elite. As it happened, the CCF did not make a significant breakthrough in the 1935 contest. Instead the Liberals returned with a majority government and King fulfilled his promise by shunting voting reform off into a parliamentary committee stacked with anti-reform members.[148] The committee did contain one labour member with some experience of PR in Manitoba. However, by the end of the process he too voted against change, declaring that the voting reforms in the west had not lived up to their expectations.[149]

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[144] Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada," 191-8.

[145] Kings's success in gathering third party adherents back into the fold in recounted in John Herd Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-39: Decades of Discord*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), chapter 6, "Patching Up the Old Political Order," 104-137.

[146] Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada," 198-9.

[147] Elections British Columbia, *Electoral History of British Columbia, 1871-1986*, (Victoria: Queen's Printer, 1988), 173; Grace MacInnis, *J.S. Woodsworth, A Man to Remember*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1953), 286.

[148] Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada," 229.

[149] Phillips, "Challenges to the Voting System in Canada," 238. The use of PR in Winnipeg long divided the left, with criticisms emerging shortly after its introduction and various challenges to its use mounted by Labour members of council from the late 1920s on. CCF members did not agree amongst themselves on its repeal at the provincial level in 1955. See Pilon, "PR in Canada: An Historical Sketch," 30; Jansen, "The Single Transferable Vote in Alberta and Manitoba," 219-23.

When the CCF finally won power at the provincial level in 1944, PR increasingly lost support in the party, leaving the Communists its only defenders on the left.[150]

Continental Europe

As an institutional reform, PR held its position not through abstract democratic reasoning but through its practical results. It helped keep the socialists at bay in Scandinavia, it isolated them effectively in the Benelux countries, and it proved useful in managing tense conflicts in Ireland. But in other countries proportional voting did not effect a balance that traditionally powerful groups were prepared to settle for. In the three major continental countries of Europe - Germany, France and Italy - PR did not survive the inter-war period, though for very different reasons. In France, though the voting reforms of 1919 had been pushed along by labour unrest and the general air of revolution wafting throughout Europe, the actual system chosen also reflected the desires of the centre-right to marginalize both the left and religious issues. In its first trial in the fall of 1919 left support stalled at prewar levels while the new Bloc National won a majority of seats.[151] The coalition-hopping Radicals had thrown their lot in with the Bloc in 1919 but switched to the left in 1924, leading a centre-left coalition to victory. However the left soon discovered that they had little influence over their government as the Radicals increasingly sought extra support from more centrist Bloc members. Though the left were unhappy with these developments, their organizational weakness meant that the French party system as whole was weak, and strong parties were key to exacting concessions that might last. In the end, the Radicals, who felt the current system weakened their role at the centre of French politics, convinced the left to repeal the

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[150] Pilon, "Proportional Representation in Canada: An Historical Sketch," 31-2. The Communists had gained representation in both the provincial house and city council under PR but failed to return any members after its repeal.

[151] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 104.

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system in favour of the majoritarian double ballot in 1927.[152] But this did not settle the question - efforts to reform the voting system re-emerged in nearly every election cycle in the inter-war period.[153]

Meanwhile in Germany and Italy no democratic compromise could be reached. After the Social Democrats squandered their advantage in the early days of the republic, a rejuvenated right pressed forcefully for a retreat from the social and economic promises made between 1918 and 1920.[154] Crippling reparations, runaway inflation, joblessness and a resurgent nationalism conspired to make political negotiation next to impossible in a country with little experience of actual politically-mediated struggles over state power. Reichstag elections were repeatedly stalemated, failing to produce an effective majority government. Though later scholars would heap blame on Weimar Germany's highly proportional voting system, contemporary participants and observers made little comment. For the most part the SPD stood behind PR as the one great reform of their republican 'revolution,' though as the twenties wore on some younger members began questioning its operation.[155] The Catholic Zentrum did call for a review of PR, and two bills did come before the Reichstag, one in 1924 and another in 1930, proposing a shift to some hybrid majority/proportional system - but both failed.[156] When PR started registering a Nazi decline in 1933, Hitler solved the problem by seizing power and abolishing competitive elections altogether.

Italy dispensed with PR and elections much earlier than Germany. The first election under PR in Italy in 1919 brought to the surface all the contradictions then bubbling within the nation: urban versus rural, north versus south, liberationists versus

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[152] Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections*, 97-8; Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe*, 179
[153] See Cole and Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections Since 1789*, 63-9.
[154] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 192
[155] Hodge, "Three Ways to Lose a Republic," 176.
[156] Pulzer, "Germany," 90.

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imperialists, socialists versus everyone else, and so on. The ruling Liberals were shocked and unprepared for the results.[157] The Socialists gained 32% of the vote while the new Catholic party captured 20%. But the national totals obscure the regional impact of the results. The left gained its 32% of the total vote mostly in the North which meant that it had gained well over 50% in most of the urban, industrialized parts of the country. Left support was strong even in the rural parts of the north.[158] Meanwhile, the south was dominated by the imperialist right, the most corrupt sections of the Liberal party, and Catholic supporters. Italy was like two countries geographically and economically.[159] The left victories in the north fuelled their militancy and, amid the intransigence of parliament, furthered their commitment to direct actions like land seizures and cost-of-living protests. At the same time, centre-right dominance over the south fuelled their impatience with the left, inspiring direct actions of their own in the form of attacks on left politicians, labour leaders and supporters. Each side built up their supporters' expectations - revolution on the left, imperial and territorial gain on the right - but neither could deliver on their promises.[160] Meanwhile the Liberals could not agree how to respond. With very little experience of brokering conflicts in a mass body politic, they blamed the voting system or secretly supported the right-wing militias to deal with the left.[161]

Another election in 1921 did not solve the crisis. Though Liberal fortunes improved and left support declined, the latter fell mostly because increasing right-wing

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[157] Seton-Watson, *Italy From Liberalism to Fascism*, 549.

[158] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 129-30

[159] Numerous authors attest to the bifurcated state of Italy's economic and political development, noting that unlike most of western Europe, Italy did not become a predominantly urban, industrialized society until after World War II. See Tobias Abse, "Italy," in S. Berger and D. Broughton (eds.), *The Force of Labour: The Western European Labour Movement and the Working Class in the Twentieth Century*,138-9; John A. Davis, "Socialism and the Working Classes in Italy Before 1914," in Dick Geary (ed.), *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe Before 1914*, (New York: Berg, 1989), 210-11.

[160] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 171-4

[161] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 315; Rueschemeyer *et al*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 104-5.

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vigilantism suppressed voter turnout and divided the left about how best to respond. By 1922 the country verged on civil war.[162] After the Fascist March on Rome the Liberals invited Mussolini to form a government, though he had only a small parliamentary party, and agreed to grant him emergency measures to deal with the crisis. The Liberals were not prepared to make the leap from a party of notables to a genuine mass party and tried to use the Fascists as a temporary, proxy alternative.[163] One of Il Duce's initiatives was to change the voting system. The Liberals desperately wanted an end to PR - which they blamed for most of the postwar instability - in favour of a return to single member ridings, a proposal Mussolini toyed with.[164] But in the end he proposed a skewed majority system that would award the leading party in the election two-thirds of the seats, providing they gained at least 25% of the vote. The rest of the parties would share the last third proportionately. The Liberals supported the measure in 1924 assuming that they would be the prime beneficiaries, and that they could introduce a single member system later on.[165] However, even before the new system was passed, the Fascists had effectively terrorized democracy out of existence. Subsequent elections were mostly for show.[166]

After the initial burst of labour militancy in the two years following WWI the left ran into the entrenched wall of opposition from traditional elites and worsening economic

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[162] Seton-Watson, *Italy From Liberalism to Fascism*, 587-90; Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 336

[163] Adrian Lyttleton, *The Seizure of Power*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 11-2; Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 339, 350.

[164] Salvemini, *The Origins of Fascism in Italy*, 316. At one point, to distract Liberals from one of his many indiscretions, Mussolini did introduce a bill to return to single member districts. See Lyttleton, *The Seizure of Power*, 263.

[165] Ulrich, "Historiography, Sources and Methods for the Study of Electoral Laws in Italy," 327-8; Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 346-7; Salvemini, *The Origins of Fascism in Italy*, 392-6. Mussolini wanted to marginalize his political competitors both within and outside of his Fascist movement and considered a plurality and regionally-based majority system before settling on his super-majority option. The negotitions are recounted in detail in Lyttleton, *The Seizure of Power*, 121-35.

[166] Mair, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*, 344-6. Lyttleton notes that the election following the passage of the new voting system was characterized by fairly free and democratic administration in the northern cities, helping explain how the opposition gained 33% of the total vote, but blatant intimidation and corruption everywhere else. See Lyttleton, *The Seizure of Power*, 146-8.

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conditions that only further weakened their impact and denuded their ranks. Efforts to further PR adoptions after the great wave of 1919-20 usually failed.[167] In countries using it, PR was judged not by the public promises made during its adoption, that it might further democracy and social inclusion, but by how effectively it marginalized the left. Where it succeeded, the partisan consensus for PR usually broke down, with the left complaining about its effects. Where the left proved weak, PR was often repealed as an unnecessary complication of democratic process. And where PR failed to stifle the left, or offer a clear path to some kind of conservative hegemony, democracy itself was often sacrificed.

However, while countries like Germany and Italy and regions like central and eastern Europe ultimately failed in establishing some kind of minimal democratic rule, most western countries muddled through the interwar period maintaining mass suffrage, responsible government and regular elections. The threat of democracy that elites feared proved manageable by a host of means - institutional reforms, the rise of mass parties of the centre and right, and the liberal application of money to the electoral process. The right were learning how to respond to the new era of mass politics and counter some of the organizational advantages of the left. In the end, the crisis passed and, much to the surprise of traditional and business elites, the sizeable working class electorate in most countries did not translate into leftist majorities at the polls. Except where the left remained on the brink of power, the concessions of the immediate postwar period were either forgotten or whittled away. Where it was not already in place, elites lost interest in voting system reforms like PR, finding other less politically porous methods of protecting their interest.

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[167] Examples include efforts to change the voting system in Britain in 1924 and 1931, and in Canada in 1923 and 1934-6.

Conclusion

The first two decades of the twentieth century bore witness to an increasingly pitched struggle for and against democracy in western countries. As the west became more urbanized and industrialized a working class was made out of the struggles spawned by such enormous social and economic change. To represent this emergent working class, left political parties emerged out of numerous conflicting social movements distinguished by distinctive forms of organization and compelling explanations of working class problems. These parties would eventually pose the most serious threat to the status quo that traditional elites had ever seen. The rise of working class parties also increased interest in voting system reform, from the left to further electoral justice and better the representation of fledgling left and labour parties, and from the right to divide the proponents of accountable government and democracy, and ultimately keep the left from power.

Before WWI, PR was primarily introduced by conservative regimes to divide their opponents, thus defeating both liberal demands for responsible government and left demands for democracy, but made little progress elsewhere despite considerable interest. But the onset of 'total war' during WWI shifted the balance of class forces, eventually strengthening the left by creating new networks of social organization and thereby the mobilization of a host of new social demands. Where the left could remain an explicit champion of democracy and oppositional force, as in continental Europe's neutral countries, their mobilizing efforts forced the pace of democratic reform and the adoption of PR. Elsewhere, the contradictory social alliances required for war-making put a lid on the democratizing efforts for most of the war that subsequently exploded in the immediate postwar period, fuelled by wartime privations and the example of revolution abroad. As the last barriers to at least minimal democratic rule fell, elites scrambled for

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ways to limit the working class majority they assumed might come to power. PR became the key reform in a series of trade-offs for full suffrage or responsible government or free and fair elections, a way of managing the contradictions of a specifically capitalist form democracy by embedding class compromises in the state institutions themselves as a kind of 'condensation' of class forces.

But the elite responses coming out of WWI were not uniform. While all western countries witnessed substantial social upheaval in the immediate postwar period and conceded various labour and social policy reforms, their varying responses were conditioned by the strength of their opponents, their own past experience with mass elections and labour politics, and the particular historical sequence of events. The conservative regimes dominating the European continent shifted decisively to PR as the key means of limiting the socialist left, a decision they hardly second-guessed given the enduring strength of the electoral left and organized labour in most countries. Exceptions included Italy, where conservatives quickly acquiesced in the elimination of the democratic experiment, and France, where the weakness of the left fuelled the repeal of the semi-proportional voting system. In Anglo-American countries PR, though much discussed, was not introduced at the national level. Countries in the British orbit had much more experience in mass elections and more confidence in seeing their way through the upheavals of 1918-19. Where party competition put pressure on conventional elites, majority voting system reforms were much more readily introduced than PR. Of course, the fact that Britain had an election so close to the war victory may have insulated the polity from historically specific pressures that came later, the labour and social upheaval that could have motivated a move to PR.

In the end, voting system reforms could be found at the heart of most democratic transitions around WWI as the left championed a substantive social and economic

democracy and the right resorted to voting system reform in an attempt to hobble their efforts and reassert their own hegemony. But the move to adopt voting system reforms was not an automatic response. It represented an historically contingent strategy on the part of the both the left and right, one that could change as conditions changed, or as the combatants adapted to the new circumstances, or players learned new ways of achieving the same ends.

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Chapter Six: Voting System Reform and the Cold War

Introduction

Though not as broad or sweeping as the democratic reforms that emerged from World War I, the fifteen year period following World War II produced intense debate and pitched struggles over voting system reform in the United States and Europe, particularly as concerned proportional representation. Surprisingly, these postwar voting system reforms have been largely overlooked in most accounts of western democratic institutions and their development. In Italy and France the question of the proper choice of voting system remained in flux into the 1950s, while in Germany the possibility of change remained on the agenda to the end of the 1960s. In the United States, voting system debate became intertwined with the Cold War both at home and abroad. The few municipal uses of PR in America came under fire as 'un-American' forms of voting, especially where they allowed Communists or left-wing councilors to gain election. Most were repealed just after the war or at some point in the 1950s. Abroad, American commentators blamed PR for the rise of extremist or 'anti-system' parties of both the left and right, while US political science quickly weighed in on the topic with 'proof' that PR led to a proliferation of parties, government instability and weak accountability. Yet by the 1960s voting system reform as a topic of concern in western industrialized democracies had noticeably ebbed for both elites and academics. On the whole Europe continued to use PR, despite lingering American opprobrium, while Anglo-American countries, for the most part, never seriously questioned their relative majority and majority systems. The French reform of 1958 proved to be the last successful voting system change until the resurgence of interest in the question in the 1980s and 1990s. The shift from widespread concern to indifference can be explained by changes in the

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nature of political competition facing western industrialized countries in the decades after the war.

Postwar voting system reform in Europe - and the American response to it - was given shape by the challenge of left politics that swept Europe following World War II. War had destroyed both the physical and ideological bases of prewar Europe. Resistance to Nazi aggression and occupation helped forge a broad political consensus for far-reaching economic and democratic reforms, while utterly discrediting the traditional political class, many of whom had collaborated with the invaders. With the decline of the traditional right went the last of the interwar ambivalence about democracy, at least at the level of public discourse. Everyone was a 'democrat' now. Meanwhile the widespread recognition of the Soviet Union's key role in defeating fascism, and the leading role of Communists in the nationally-based resistance movements, contributed to a decisive shift in public attitudes towards both. For their part, Communists eschewed their past dismissals of bourgeois democracy and became defenders of electoral and parliamentary power. Now they would seek socialism by the ballot box and enter coalitions with other parties. By 1946 the strategy appeared to be working - a broad centre-left had taken office throughout much of Europe, which included Communists as leading government parties in Italy and France. Initially, at these moments of democratic rebirth, a consensus for proportional voting stretched across the political spectrum - even the US approved.

But the challenge of the left, and the undeniably popular social agendas they sponsored, did not go unanswered. Even before the end of WWII the United States, with some help from Britain, began making plans to challenge the left hegemony they could see emerging. Buttressing and rebuilding a right-wing alternative, while attempting to divide the centre-left, became the cornerstone of American foreign policy even before the launching of the Cold War. Over the next decade, while some modest concessions on

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social policy were granted, an American-fueled counter-attack by the European right would destroy the postwar consensus. The manipulation of voting systems became one weapon among many to limit and divide the left. Only with the effective marginalization of the left, either through electoral defeat or by narrowing the scope of its economic and democratic agenda, would voting system reform fade from the political radar.

The history of voting system reforms after WWII fall into four broad periods: the centre-left hegemony of 1945-7, the making of the Cold War from 1947-51, the marginalization of the left between 1951 and 1959, and the decline of voting system reform from 1959-75. While significant battles over voting systems occurred in New York City, Australia and Canada, and some minor tweaking of voting formulas took place in a number of Scandinavian countries, the most dynamic struggles played out in France, Italy and Germany. In this chapter we'll sketch in the historical context behind voting system reforms in these different periods and then turn to a more in-depth treatment of the reform process in these countries to explain why they were so contested.

The postwar struggle: from 'anti-fascist possibility' to Cold War 'democracy'

Long before the war ended it was clear to observers both within and outside Europe that public sentiment had shifted strongly toward the left. Nazi rule had wreaked havoc on local civil society, destroying prewar alliances and balances of power. In most locales the prewar political elite - in effect, most of the centre-right of the political spectrum - actively collaborated with the Germans. When the war began to turn against the Axis powers in 1943 these collaborators were utterly discredited, leaving the field open to the left. As populations bore witness to mounting death tolls and the destruction of great swathes of urban Europe, this combined with lingering memories of the

Depression and the appeasement policies that ultimately led to war, leading to a greater appreciation for left themes like economic security, peace and internationalism. As a more active resistance to Nazi rule sprang up across Europe in the last two years of war, new alliances were forged that transcended traditional divisions between left and right, and a broadly-accepted public consensus emerged in favour of social security, full employment, state intervention in the economy, and punishment for those responsible for war and collaborating with the enemy. This 'moment of anti-fascist possibility,' as Geoff Eley has dubbed it, promised to finally deliver on the left's historic goal of economic, not just political, democracy.[1]

The anticipation of left political hegemony fuelled keen interest in democratic and constitutional reform, both on the left and amongst their opponents. As with the end of WWI the traditional right were keen on PR to limit the left but given their compromised position in most European countries after WWII they lacked influence. Left parties had long advocated proportional voting and the mathematical clarity of its results only reinforced broader left themes of fairness and equal shares. Thus left advocacy of PR was not entirely surprising. Yet some left parties had moved away from commitments on PR in the interwar period, especially where they might win a majority government under different rules. Thus left demands for proportionality, far from being some 'natural' response to multipartism or a dogmatic adherence to doctrine, were also given shape by the nature of the party system they competed within.[2] The key factor in a number of

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[1] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 288; Geoff Eley, "Back to the Beginning: European Labor, U.S. Influence, and the Start of the Cold War," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 40 (Fall 1991), 1991, 93.

[2] For views that see the adoption of PR in this period as a 'natural' response to multi-partism, see Mario Amoroso, "Italy," in Hand, Georgel and Sasse (eds.), *European Electoral Systems Handbook*, 141; Christopher Seton-Watson, "Italy," in Bogdanor and Butler (eds.), *Democracy and Elections: Electoral Systems and their Political Consequences*, 110; and Ullrich, "Historiography, Sources and Methods for the Study of Electoral Laws in Italy," in Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms: Origins of Voting Systems in Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 330. For an argument that the adoption of PR was the result of doctrine, see Robert G. Neuman, "The Struggle for Electoral Reform in France," *American Political Science Review*, 45:3 (September 1951), 741.

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countries was the unique position of Communist parties. In both France and Italy Communist leadership in the resistance and the Soviet burden in the war dramatically increased support for left. But historically relations within different branches of the left had been anything but smooth. As war gave way to democratic restructuring PR became a way of maintaining the antifascist unity of Communists, Socialists and centre-left Christian Democrats, even as each hedged their bets against each other. PR was also welcomed on the right, both to prevent their complete electoral marginalization and to limit the left's triumph. However, even in countries where the democratic and constitutional systems could be simply re-established - Norway, Denmark, the Benelux countries - there was no question of moving away from PR given the anticipated surge in left support.

Italy, France and Germany, on the other hand, could not simply take up where pre-war politics had left off. The Italian Fascists had dismantled, destroyed or discredited most of the Giolittian-era liberal regime. As most political forces had been actively suppressed since 1925 their return appeared to mark a symbolic renewal of the polity, one that they sought to entrench with a thorough-going democratic and constitutional renewal as well. The chronic instability of governing majorities in the French Third Republic, and the emergence of the collaborationist Vichy regime from its remains, convinced nearly everyone of the need to break with past constitutional practice. In a referendum in 1945 French voters decisively rejected a return to the Third Republic constitution - 96% voted for change.[3] Meanwhile in Germany the occupying powers utilized a host of subtle methods to influence the renewal of politics, though competition amongst the powers and the uncertain future of the divided country meant the process proceeded slowly. In each

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[3] Roy Pierce, *French Politics and Political Institutions*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 39-40.

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case the political power of the left, both real or anticipated, weighed heavily in the deliberations.

Concern with the postwar electoral victory for the left throughout most of Europe was not contained within national borders. The left's many national democratic triumphs strained what were already tense relations amongst the Allied powers occupying much of the continent. Beyond the various national contests a larger struggle to give shape to the postwar order was playing out that pitted an American design for a new world economy on the one hand against Soviet interests for border security and economic compensation for wartime losses on the other. Though neither country completely controlled its regional sphere of influence, both attempted to influence the postwar course of events in European politics through their control of civil administration, the process of economic recovery, and by giving incentives to sympathetic local political forces. From 1945 to 1947 both the US and the Soviet Union operated with an outward appreciation of pluralism and democratic process, even as they funneled resources to their favoured parties. In this context, the implications were largely democratic for the national players, initially on both sides. However, to assure no advantage to the other side, and make a public display of their newfound commitment to pluralism locally and abroad, both the Soviet Union and the United States either endorsed or did not preclude PR for elections throughout Europe. But European politics would prove difficult to manage. By 1947 both superpowers were becoming troubled with the drift of continental politics and impatient with the intractability of Allied negotiations concerning the future of Germany, reparations, and the shape of the world economy. When negotiations and a commitment to co-existence finally broke down in the spring of 1947, the resulting 'cold war' would contribute to the break-up of anti-fascist political coalition governments and a new interest in voting system reform.

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At the heart of the dispute were economic concerns. In carrying most of the burden of the war against Germany, the Soviet Union had been left physically and economically devastated. Its leaders were relying on western promises to help rebuild its economy and end the country's isolation in terms of both diplomacy and trade. As such, the Soviet Union responded cautiously to American and British demands both during the war and afterward.[4] The Americans, on the other hand, were in very different shape at the end of the war. Per capita, the US had suffered the least of any combatants in the war, and they emerged from the victory economically and militarily stronger than ever. But American State Department officials understood the key role that the war had played in decisively lifting the US out of the Depression. Now with the war's end, the country faced a potential crisis of over-capacity and the danger of slipping back into economic stagnation. US planners sought the reconstruction of a world economy that would guarantee markets for a continued American economic expansion.[5] The point of conflict for both countries was Germany. The USSR needed either western economic aid or reparations from Germany and eastern Europe to restore its economy. The Americans, on the other hand, were hoping to fully re-incorporate Germany and its traditional eastern European hinterland into their new world economy.[6] Between 1945 and 1947 both countries worked at keeping up the appearance of playing nice as long as they could reasonably hope to secure their objectives.

The problem was that there seemed little basis for genuine compromise. The Americans did not seriously consider aiding the rebuilding of the Soviet economy, except

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[4] Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War: Soviet Strategies in Europe, 1943-1956*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 6. Kennedy-Pipe cites Soviet troop withdrawals from Czechoslovakia in 1945 and Iran in 1946 as evidence of that Stalin and his advisors were keen to maintain good relations with the US.
[5] Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1943-45*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 279, 618-9.
[6] Bruce Kuklick, *American Policy and the Division of Germany: The Clash with the Russians over Reparations*, (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1972), 2; Kolko, *The Politics of War*, 340, 425, 506.

under terms that would effectively de-Bolshevize it. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the US basically stalled for time hoping that the colossal scale of the economic and social problems would eventually push Europe toward market-led solutions and away from its dalliances with socialism, while convincing the Soviets to accept much less than they were promised at Yalta.[7] Though the Soviet Union used much of its influence to dampen leftist expectations across Europe after the war, precisely to reassure the US and local elites of its lack of imperial ambition, American political elites interpreted the European left's victories as proof of just the opposite.[8] As left fortunes appeared only to be improving between 1945-47 American strategists embarked on a bold effort to marginalize them and the economic and security claims of the Soviet Union by formulating a controversial economic stimulus package, the Marshall Plan, and by forcing the pace of German state renewal in the western-occupied zones. American efforts were, not surprisingly, strenuously opposed by the Soviet Union, sparking a new phase of international hostilities, eventually dubbed the 'Cold War.'[9]

The American sponsorship of the Cold War was designed to shift the basis of European politics from a centre-left, anti-fascist coalition to a centre-right, anti-Communist orientation. Utilizing the innovative advertising techniques developed to sell US war bonds, 'anti-communism' arguably became America's key export in the postwar era, though its success was clearly linked to the appearance of economic aid. Most left

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[7] Kuklick, *American Policy and the Division of Germany*, 139.

[8] Kolko, *The Politics of War*, 95, 34-6, 184, 345, 437, 443, 620. American elites of the period, and the great bulk of American scholarship chronicling the era thereafter, appear unable or unwilling to accept that wide-sweeping public support existed in Europe for a kind of economic democracy. Thus the only explanations they can find for left success at the polls must be subversion, intimidation, Communist or Soviet conspiracy, etc.

[9] Revisionist scholarship has challenged the widely held view that the Cold War was a defensive response by America to Soviet aggression, with evidence from both American and Soviet archives demonstrating that the Americans deliberately played to fears of a Communist threat for political and economic purposes, and that the Soviets were more interested in defence than expansion. See Melvyn P. Leffler, "From the Truman Doctrine: Lessons and Dilemmas of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History*, 7:4 (Fall 1983), 247-8; Eley, "Back to the Beginning: European Labor, U.S. Influence, and the Start of the Cold War," 98.

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parties, particularly in countries where Communist parties were weak, initially resisted the pull of anti-communism and the Marshall Plan that accompanied it. But soon after most agreed to participate in the American-directed economic renewal program.[10] Complicating things for the left was American interference in local unions and newspapers, as US funds were used to strategically divide the left and union movements, eventually contributing to the breakdown of both French and Italian labour confederations, and a greater distancing of Socialist parties from their former Communist partners.[11] In France, CIA funds would help support the Socialist newspaper, while in Italy American influence led to a breakaway Social Democratic party joining the DC's centre-right government.[12] Of course, US efforts found many local allies, particularly on the right. In both Italy and France Christian democrat parties lost support to more right-wing opponents in local elections in 1946-7 in part because of their governing alliance with Communists. The DC in particular faced strong pressure from the Catholic church

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[10] Scandinavian countries were particularly hesitant about taking sides in the emerging Cold War, though after considerable debate, particularly on the left, they did eventually sign on to the Marshall Plan. See Helge O. Pharo, "Bridgebuilding and Reconstruction: Norway Faces the Marshall Plan," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 1:1 (1976), 125-53; Leon Dalgas Jensen, "Denmark and the Marshall Plan, 1947-48: The Decision to Participate," *Scandinanvian Journal of History*, 14:1 (1989), 57-83. Nor was criticism and caution limited to the left. Most of the European centre-right also hesitated joining due to concerns about issues of national sovereignty. Most signed on only in 1948, under pressure of international events and strong-arm American lobbying. See D.W. Ellwood, "Italy, Europe and the Cold War: The Politics and Economics of Limited Sovereignty," in C. Duggan and C. Wagstaff (eds.), *Italy in the Cold War: Politics, Culture and Society 1948-58*, (Oxford: Berg, 1995), 25-6.

[11] For American efforts to break both international union solidarity and divide national labour bodies in Europe, see Peter Weiler, "The United States, International Labor, and the Cold War: The Breakup of the World Federation of Trade Unions," *Diplomatic History*, 5:1 (Winter 1981), 1-22; Frederico Romero, *The United States and the European Trade Union Movement, 1944-1951*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), particularly chapter 4, "The Breakup of the International Trade Union Movement," 114-37; Ronald L. Filippelli, *American Labor and Postwar Italy, 1943-1953*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 181-2; and Carolyn Eisenberg, "Working Class Politics and the Cold War: American Intervention in the German Labor Movement," *Diplomatic History*, 7:4 (Fall 1983), 283-306.

[12] For a general overview of covert US activity in Europe, see Trevor Barnes, "The Secret Cold War: The CIA and American Foreign Policy in Europe, 1946-1956, Part I," *The Historical Journal*, 24:2 (June 1981), 399-415. For more country specific references see Douglas J. Forsyth, "The peculiarities of Italo-American relations in historical perspective," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 3:1 (1998), 2-3; Maurice Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front: Government and People 1936-1996*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 159; Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 302-3; Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 169. In some cases the US channeled money through other organizations like the American Federation of Labor. See Filippelli, *American Labor and Postwar Italy, 1943-1953*, 112, 114.

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to break with the left. As the right were stymied in their efforts to speak out against reformist governments because of their disreputable war activities and the undeniable popularity of the centre-left's progressive agenda, the slowly re-emergent business associations of Europe gratefully latched on to anti-communism as another tactic to re-assert their hegemony.[13]

The Cold War also altered American and European right-wing views about voting system reform. The postwar consensus for PR was replaced by a strident defence of majoritarian voting rules. With America's deep pockets now committed to electing the right at all costs, majority voting rules were thought to be the best defense against electoral communism. Basically, the thinking was that in a left-right split, majority voting rules would force Communist supporters to vote strategically for Socialists or the centre, perhaps keeping them out of parliaments altogether. Without the respectability of holding legislative office, Communists would be quickly dismissed and deserted by most

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[13] Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988*, (London: Penguin, 1990), 111. There is much debate about the precise nature of American influence over western European politics in this period. Some scholars, particularly on the left, highlight how the US skillfully utilized political and economic incentives to wean Socialist and centre parties away from political alliances with Communist parties, a neutral position in international affairs, and any positive view of the Soviet Union. Recently a host of 'post-Cold War' authors have challenged these views, claiming that there is little evidence of any 'secret deals' between the US and any European political parties, that the Marshall Plan did not really have much effect on the European recovery, that anti-communism was as European in origin as it was American, and that the US did not force European governments to do anything they were not already preparing to do. Thus Irwin Wall claims that there were no 'secret deals' and that US policy preferences did not outweigh domestic ones. Richard Vinen argues that the Socialists in France were primarily responsible for the decision to oust the Communists, not the US, and that local anti-communism had French roots. Alan Milward makes a case that the European economic recovery was not reliant on the Marshall Plan, etc. But these criticisms are aimed at straw arguments. Few of those focused on American efforts dispute that postwar Europe was riven with political differences, or would doubt that American economic and political efforts did not solely determine outcomes, or would claim that European governments acted unproblematically on American 'orders.' The point being raised - and missed by the critics - is that American efforts to influence the internal affairs of European countries often played a crucial role in tipping political competition in one direction, in aiding one side against another, and by doing so made some outcomes more plausible or attractive than others. For some of the 'post-Cold War' views, see Irwin Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945-1954*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Richard Vinen, *France 1934-1970*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 95-7; and Alan S. Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*, (London: Methuen, 1984); among many others. For some on the other side of the debate, see Kolko, *The Politics of War*; Leffler "From the Truman Doctrine: Lessons and Dilemmas of the Cold War,"; and Robert Gildea, *France Since 1945*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 8-9.

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of their followers.[14] Clearly an undifferentiated application of such thinking would under-estimate both the depth and resiliency of Communist support in Europe. For their part, the Americans had pursued a pragmatic approach to questions of institutional design. PR had been less a point of principle with them than a strategic concession in unpredictable circumstances. While left support remained untested, the US supported PR in Europe, though American advisors cautioned the centre-right to exclude it from any constitution so it might be changed later.[15] However, where the right had a clear advantage and the left remained divided or weak, the US could be forceful in pushing for majority voting rules to further entrench left marginalization. For instance, in 1951 the US ambassador insisted the Greek government replace their PR voting system with the traditional Anglo-American plurality approach or face an end to American aid - a demand government officials eventually had to accept.[16]

In western Europe, with the centre-left's political hegemony broken and a sizeable chunk of left voting support now effectively isolated with the marginalized Communists, parties of the centre and centre-right shifted strategies. Bolstered by American aid and influence, the centre-right moved to marginalize left support even further by abandoning prior commitments to PR in favour of more majoritarian voting methods. But the unity or disunity of the left itself also played a key role. In Italy the strong links between Communists and Socialists could not be broken so easily, and their unity meant they remained an electoral threat to the new centre-right government of the Christian Democrats. As a result, the DC remained committed to the postwar consensus for PR. But in France, the political isolation of the Communists opened the way for a reconsideration of the postwar PR system, though settling on an alternative proved

[14] Giuseppe Di Palma, "The Available State: Problems of Reform," in Peter Lange and Sidney Tarrow (eds.), *Italy in Transition: Conflict and Consensus,* (London, Frank Cass and Company, 1980), 149-50.
[15] Pulzer, "Germany," 93-4.
[16] Jon Kofas, *Under the Eagle's Claw: Exceptionalism in Postwar U.S.-Greek Relations,* (London: Praeger, 2003), 20-3.

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difficult. In Germany too the postwar consensus for PR gave way to a scramble for some form of majority voting by the political right when it appeared they would have the upper hand. Meanwhile in Anglo-American countries anti-communism proved a useful tool in campaigns to roll back progressive reforms, discredit reformist labour and left parties, and occasionally bring about a new voting system.

In hindsight, the lines dividing the postwar era appear so clear. For most western scholars 1947 marked the marginalization of electoral communism everywhere, 1949 witnessed the descent of the Iron Curtain across Europe, and the 1950s showcased the superiority of capitalism over Soviet-sponsored communism as the west experienced the beginning of a long postwar economic boom. But from the vantage point of 1950, the future was far from certain. Revolutionary communism appeared to be expanding, nationalist movements were proving increasingly restless with imperial and neo-colonial powers, and the Soviet Union's wartime reputation - while damaged - still wielded some international influence. In fact, the Soviet Union's proposal for the reunification of Germany in 1951 threw America's Cold War architects into a panic for fear that 'peace' might break out in Europe and ease the East/West polarization so crucial to US objectives.[17] At home, western anti-Communists could not be certain that their political or economic objectives had been secured. Between 1948 and 1951 the international economy slid in and out of recession, while the electoral left continued to secure

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[17] Nor was it the first such 'threat.' See J. Samuel Walker, " 'No More Cold War': American Foreign Policy and the 1948 Soviet Peace Offensive," *Diplomatic History*, 5:1 (Winter 1981), 75-91; and a discussion of the Communist/Soviet 'peace campaign' of 1949-50 in Alexander Werth, *France 1940-1955*, (New York: Henry Holt, 1956), 439. While Cold War scholars and most American political elites dismissed Soviet efforts as cynical and without merit, recent study suggests that the peace initiatives may have been sincere and that US responses were motivated by a fear of having their carefully negotiated European security arrangements unravel. See Anne L. Phillips, *Soviet Policy Toward East Germany Reconsidered*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 121-6; Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War*, 150-2, 161-2; Herman-Josef Rupierer, "American Policy Toward Germany Unification, 1945-1955," in J. Deifendorf *et al*, *American Policy and the Reconstruction of West Germany, 1945-1955*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 58-9.

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considerable voter support and remain open to working with centre parties.[18] The recent period of postwar solidarity across the centre-left was still fresh in the public mind and, given a few years of economic stagnation and poor government from the centre-right, might become attractive again. Thus the centre-right and their American supporters continued to work on two levels, both castigating the left at the level of public discourse and undermining them surreptitiously with more structural reforms. Though by 1951 the electoral left had been defeated and forced from power throughout the west (with exception of the Scandinavian countries) their opponents sought still further guarantees against their revival. The manipulation of voting rules toward this end remained a priority wherever the threat of the left appeared palpable.

In Europe voting system reform remained a key issue in the 1950s primarily in the three biggest continental democracies: Italy, France and Germany. The decline or marginalization of the left was taken up in all three countries as an opportunity to re-craft the rules of the electoral game against them by the centre-right. Of course, the proponents of change seldom characterized their efforts this way, preferring instead to talk of reforms that would make democracy more stable and government more coherent.[19] In this they gained considerable aid from various strata of the intellectual classes, particularly American academe. A perceptible shift in democratic theory witnessed the

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[18] Alan Milward dissents from the view that Europe's economy was unstable between 1947 and 1952, characterizing, for instance, the recession of 1949 as brief and with little impact. However, just as critics have taken Milward to task for under-estimating the social and political forces driving the reception to the Marshall Plan (i.e. whether it did actually save Europe's economy is less important than the fact that people thought it was needed at the time), so too must we acknowledge the uncertainty at the time about Europe's economic performance. Neither the public nor the political class could get a clear sense about whether economic conditions would really recover into the 1950s, and many worried about a return to worldwide depression. As Romero notes, even the US State Department, with all its resources, were pessimistic about the economic future of Europe when the Marshall Plan ended in 1952, and as late as 1954 Americans readily donated $100 million to further the cause of economic restructuring in Europe. See Milward, *The Reconstruction of Europe*; and F. Romero, "Interdependence and Integration in American Eyes: From the Marshall Plan to Currency Convertability," in Alan S. Milward *et al*, *The Frontier of National Sovereignty: History and Theory 1945-1992*, (New York: Routledge, 1993), 157-8.
[19] Muriel Grindrod, *The Rebuilding of Italy*, (London: Royale Institute of International Affairs, 1955), 82; Seton-Watson, "Italy," 116.

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replacement of the traditional democratic imaginary of 'the people' ranged against various oppressors (government, plutocrats, etc.) with one where a differentiated mass public, divided into separate but equally powerful plural groups, competed for power and influence. Traditional themes associated with democratic struggles like problems of social injustice and inequality, tropes that fuelled European socialism and American populism alike, made little sense in this new market-style understanding of democratic competition gaining ground with elites.[20] Thus the final triumph of 'democracy' in western industrialized countries, after more than a century of struggle to attain it, involved efforts to reshape its popular understanding and essentially narrow its scope considerably.

If western elites were forced to concede 'democracy' as an unquestionable value of the new postwar era, they lost little time in contesting what its substance should be. The left had long championed an expansive view of democracy, committed to majority rule, executive accountability and a high level of public participation in the process, a vision that now coincided largely with the public's understanding of what democracy should be.[21] But in the face of potential left-wing democratic majorities, intellectual elites began to question and repudiate most aspects of this view. Some questioned whether a left majority at the polls was really enough for a democratic majority, or whether

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[20] In American postwar discourse 'democracy' retained strong influences from the various progressive movements that stretched back to the post-Civil War period. 'Progressivism' included many, sometimes conflicting, ideas about American society, history and politics. However American historian James Livingston suggests that three key themes animated progressive thinking: a belief in the fundamental division between agriculture and capitalism, the juxtaposition of business interests versus the forces of social and political reform, and a characterization of corporations as parasitic organizations. This progressive legacy now came under challenge in the 1950s from both the liberal centre and right of the American political spectrum who vigorously denied any contradiction existed between business and democracy. On the progressive legacy see James Livingston, "Social Theory and Historical Method in the Work of William Appleman Williams," *Diplomatic History*, 25:2 (Spring 2001), 276-8. For an exhaustive, if somewhat celebratory, examination of the postwar American re-making of democratic theory, see S.M. Amadae, *Rationalizing Capitalist Democracy: The Cold War Origins of Rational Choice Liberalism*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003). For a more critical take on these developments, see Green, " 'Democracy' as a Contested Concept," specifically 4-14.
[21] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 288-91, 295-8.

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individual choices could be aggregated into collective decisions at all, while others argued that public levels of democratic participation should amount to little more than voting for or against a government.[22] The emerging polling industry was converted into a full-blown behavioural science that 'discovered' voters to be poorly informed and largely irrational, further justifying a normative bias in political science away from democratic participation as potentially extremist.[23] And a micro-industry emerged in academe studying the effects of voting systems that fuelled Anglo-American biases against proportional voting methods, thereby justifying efforts to replace them with majoritarian alternatives.[24] Of course academic arguments against the left's view of a 'strong' democracy were more Cold War window-dressing than decisive in any of the real struggles. In concrete terms, democracy was whatever the American State Department said it was, and that meant 'democracy' was usually defined to coincide with American objectives under the threat of American economic sanctions.[25] In the 1948 Italian elections the US contemplated insisting on a ban of the Communist party while, as noted

[22] See Herbert McClosky, "The Fallacy of Absolute Majority Rule," *The Journal of Politics*, 11:4 (November 1949), 637-54; Arrow, *Social Choice and Individual Values*; and Joseph P. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, (1943; New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1976), specifically, chapters 20 through 23.

[23] For a summary of the relevant developments, see William Buxton, *Talcott Parsons and the Capitalist Nation-State: Political Sociology as a Strategic Vocation*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1985), especially chapter 9 through 11. For a contemporary review of issues related to this new 'scientific' study of voting in the 1950s, see Walter Berns, "Voting Studies," in Herbert J. Storing (ed.), *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*, (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1962), 3-62.

[24] Two Europeans would prove influential on American political science as regards voting systems. Maurice Duverger's influential *Political Parties*, first published in French in 1951 and English in 1954, put forward two law-like propositions that happened to fit well with existing biases in Anglo-American political and academic circles. The first suggested that a two party system was the 'natural' model for modern societies, while the second held that the single member plurality system was key in maintaining this dualism, while majority and proportional systems would not (and thus the latter would facilitate multi-partism). Duverger's observations about the precise nature of party system dualism (that one party would necessarily be socialist) and the backwardness of the American party system were given less attention. Ferdinand Herman's *Democracy or Anarchism*, first published in 1941, was also highly influential, effectively framing much of the Anglo-American debate in the postwar period with his assertions that PR caused multipartism, political radicalization, and had allowed fascists to gain power in Germany and Italy.

[25] Drawing from his study of US involvement in Greece over the last half century, historian Jon Kofas summed American influence in a slightly different way, maintaining that "[w]hether in Greece or anywhere in the world, 'democracy' was only acceptable if it conformed to US policy." See Kofas, *Under the Eagle's Claw*, 23.

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above, in 1951 the US ambassador to Greece ordered the government to switch from PR to plurality voting. In both cases such efforts were held by American participants as necessary to help assure a 'democratic' result.[26] American ideas about 'democracy' held sway wherever American economic aid was essential. As Greece was highly dependent on US economic and military largesse, the government was compelled to introduce the change.[27]

In the 1950s voting system reform remained one among many responses to the perceived threat of the electoral left, and efforts were made in France, Italy and Germany to move away from proportional voting in the hopes that such a reform would weaken the left's strategic position in the political system. But as the decade wore on, other less visible changes began to undermine the left and lessen the need for such obvious institutional manipulations like voting system reform. Postwar economic reconstruction was remaking the shape of working class communities, weakening early twentieth century modes of working class interaction and interdependence. The rise of a new mass culture and the Cold War recast working class identity away from collectivism and solidarity toward individualism and consumerism, while the rise of the welfare state

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[26] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 294; Kofas, *Under the Eagle's Claw*, 20.

[27] The situation in Greece in the immediate postwar period makes clear how determined Americans could be in forcing their agenda on economically dependent countries, regardless of the cost to the client state. Postwar Greece was a devastated country, internally divided between popular left forces and reactionary monarchists (supported by the British and then Americans), torn apart by the Nazi invasion and a civil war, financially broke and essentially prostrate before the international community. Western aid to the right had helped decimate the wartime popular movements, leaving little opposition left standing against either the local power or American influence. The US ambassador exercised extraordinary influence on the country's day to day affairs, essentially vetoing any government policy held to be in conflict with American interests. After elections in the fall of 1951 failed to return the candidate favoured by the US, the American ambassador insisted that the government change the voting system from PR to a US-style SMP system. When they government demurred, the US State Department cut off aid worth two hundred million dollars. The government then quickly agreed to make the change. Elections under the new rules served their purpose when the US candidate won the next election in the fall of 1952, converting 49% of the popular vote into 82% of the legislative seats. By 1965, after more than a decade of similar machinations, one Greek journalist referred to Greece as "the most miserable protectorate of the United States." Not surprisingly, scholars with a benign view of American influence around the world tend to overlook US efforts in Greece. See Kofas, *Under the Eagle's Claw*, 3-4, 8, 14-5, 20-3.

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weakened working class links to left organizations geared to providing services.[28] The American plan to undermine the left with economic growth appeared to be working. At the same time, these changes altered the political interface between the public and political parties. Direct face-to-face encounters increasingly gave way to more mediated forms of political engagement, methods that privileged those with superior resources. Though left-wing parties continued to organize on a mass level, raising their operating and election funds from membership contributions, they could not re-establish their prewar structures of mass participation. The German Social Democrats, once the key organizers of the social and cultural lives of German workers, were now merely an electoral organization.[29] Meanwhile, the right mimicked the mass organization of the left but as they could not pay their bills on income from party memberships, they jealously guarded the sources of their financial contributions, obscuring their overweening reliance on capital to remain electorally competitive.[30] However, in the 'golden age' of capitalism in the 1950s business generously supported those parties with the 'right' economic policies. As one CDU representative let slip, "The money is lying in the streets. All one needs to do is pick it up."[31]

As the 1950s wore on, what the left assumed was a temporary absence from power appeared to be becoming more permanent. The apparent recovery of postwar capitalism from its systemic crises of the 1930s weakened the critical impact of left politics domestically, while the totalitarian aspects of the Soviet-controlled eastern bloc condemned the left internationally. Weakening electoral performance and the Soviet

[28] Gerassimos Moschonas, *In the Name of Social Democracy: The Great Transformation: 1945 to the Present,* (London: Verso, 2002), 35-6, 51, 102. However, while Moschonas notes how these changes created challenges for left parties, he does not accept that they precluded some kind of successful political response. Nor does he accept that these changes necessarily support the embourgeoisement thesis, i.e. that workers have effectively become middle class and as such no longer identify with a lower status.

[29] Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism,* 120-1.

[30] Arnold J. Heidenheimer, "German Party Finance: The CDU," *The American Political Science Review,* 51:2 (June 1957), 369-70.

[31] Heidenheimer, "German Party Finance: The CDU," 375.

invasion of Hungary in 1956 moved most of the social democratic left to a critical reconsideration of their commitments and policies by the late 1950s. As revisionist policies triumphed in most labour and Socialist parties of the west by the early 1960s, the left's threat to capitalism could be seriously downgraded.[32] While left policies, particularly those concerned with social and economic redistribution, remained contested by business and the right of the political spectrum, these no longer appeared to pose a serious threat to the wealthy or the smooth functioning of the system as a whole. By the late 1950s the left's democratic and economic imaginary was no longer seen as a viable alternative to the resurgent democratic capitalism of the west. The 'golden age' of capitalism undercut left support at the ballot box, undermining its economic analysis with a boom period of growth and challenging its hegemony over the working class. Extreme methods of defeating such an adversary through the manipulation of voting rules, a strategy that risked delegitimizing the political process, no longer seemed as urgent.

The 1950s began with the electoral marginalization of the left throughout western industrialized countries (excepting Scandinavia), though their critique of capitalism and robust ideas about democratic practice remained very much the alternative to the new centre-right governments, particularly in Europe. In Germany, France and Italy the centre-right attempted to buttress their new political control with institutional reforms that would hinder the left. In all three countries considerable effort was expended to change the voting system from proportional representation to some form of majority voting. But in each case reform would prove tricky to secure given the uncertain state of the postwar economy, the need for broad political coalitions, and the particular political challenges embodied in the cleavage structure of each country. By the end of the decade, only France had successfully shifted from proportional to majority voting, though the process

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[32] Moschonas, *In the Name of Social Democracy*, 21, 65, 69; Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 317. A partial exception to this trend was the performance and organization of the Italian PCI in the 1960s and 1970s.

had been marked by division, chance and extraordinary events. However, by that point, the decline of the left most everywhere meant that France was increasingly the exception to the rule. The French reform of 1958 would prove to be the last voting system change in western industrialized countries for nearly three decades.

With the overarching context of the postwar period of voting system reform sketched out, we can now turn to a more in-depth treatment of the specific struggles, starting with the more dynamic developments in Italy, France and Germany, and then turning to the more modest efforts in Anglo-American contexts like the United States, Canada, Australia and Britain.

Italy

In Europe, voting system reform emerged out of a serious postwar confrontation between left and right as the continent's three largest countries had to rebuild their economies and political institutions at the war's end. Arguably the first of Europe's three largest countries to begin a democratic renewal process was Italy. Many of the key elements that would form Italy's institutional terrain (voting rules, divisions of power, the role of parliament, etc.) and largely set the parameters for political and social struggle in the postwar period had their origin in the turbulent and uncertain years between 1944 and 1947. The period was marked by a pervasive uncertainty about what different social and political forces might do, and the relative balance of power among them. As old and new political forces emerged from the resistance to fascist rule, all were careful to avoid actions or institutional arrangements that might allow their present or future marginalization.[33]

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[33] Paul Furlong, *Modern Italy: Representation and Reform*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 54.

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In 1943 the combined effect of an orchestrated strike wave in the north, the defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad, and the Allied landings in Sicily moved Italy's ruling elites to abandon Mussolini and switch sides to the Allies. The struggle to reshape the Italian regime began almost as soon as Mussolini was pushed out of the ruling fascist council. For a time the new government tried to reinvent itself as a Salazar-style authoritarian regime, hoping to gain western support and German acquiescence by playing up the threat of leftwing insurgency. Instead, the Germans invaded, the government fled to the south, and resistance forces seriously considered forming a separate, explicitly anti-fascist government.[34] Throughout 1943-44 resistance forces in central and northern Italy grew exponentially, with membership estimated at between 200,000 and 500,000 active partisans, largely under the direction of Communist and Socialist organizers. For many on the left, conditions appeared ripe for a social revolution and the establishment of something more than a bourgeois democracy. Indeed, by April 1945 the largely left-leaning partisans would control over half of Italy, with Soviet troops just across the border in Austria, and a Socialist Yugoslavia established right next door.[35] Though urged to recognize and join the provisional government in the south by the Allies in late 1943 and early 1944, resistance forces appeared at an impasse, unwilling to sanction the existing, fascist-tainted government, and seemingly unable to form one of their own.[36]

The arrival back in Italy of Communist Party (PCI) leader Palmiro Togliatti in March 1944, fresh from exile in the Soviet Union, broke the stalemate. Whether acting under direction of the Soviets or his own assessment of the situation, Togliatti shifted the PCI away from its position in favour of a new government and toward joining the

[34] Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 345-7; Kolko, *The Politics of War*, 45; Furlong, *Modern Italy*, 56.
[35] David W. Ellwood, *Italy 1943-45*, (Bath: Leicester University Press, 1985), 152, 155; Claudin, *The Communist Movement*, 361; Kolko, *The Politics of War*, 48.
[36] Joan Barth Urban, *Moscow and the Italian Communist Party: From Togliatitti to Berlinger*, (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1986), 148, 168.

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existing one in the south.[37] Togliatti argued that Communists must join a 'national solidarity' government to assure that genuinely 'popular democracy' would be attained with the end of war. PCI leadership tipped resistance support in favour of joining the government, with Togliatti himself appointed Minister of Justice.[38] Between 1944 and 1947 the PCI refrained from mobilizing their potentially considerable popular support into public demands for immediate social reforms. Instead, the Communists encouraged unions to focus on increasing productivity rather than wages, resisted calls for increasing government control over the economy, and put their energy into constitutional design and negotiations with an eye to future left democratic victories at the polls. Here Togliatti was pursuing a strategy of studied moderation in an attempt to appeal to middle class voters, just as many other Socialist and Communist parties across Europe were doing.[39] And for a time, it appeared to be working. As Sassoon notes, between 1945 and 1950 pro-capitalist parties took a beating electorally in Europe, with only the confessional variants succeeding. Though the centrist Christian Democrats (DC) made a respectable showing in the 1946 constituent assembly elections, the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and the PCI collectively attained more votes. The idea that postwar elections would give rise to a broad left government spanning from the PCI to the left of the DC did not just seem plausible but likely.[40]

With that view in mind, the PCI bargained for a constitution sanctioning a strong parliament, with few impediments to majority rule. Given the conservative blocking role of upper houses across Europe in the interwar period, a coherent left alternative had emerged that hardly differed from the British notion of 'parliamentary supremacy.' In the

[37] Kolko, *The Politics of War*, 52-4; Stephen Hellman, "Italian Communism in the First Republic," in Stephen Gundle and Simon Parker (eds.), *The New Italian Republic: From the Fall of the Berlin Wall to Belusconi*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 72.
[38] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 43-4; Claudin, *The Communist Movement*, 348-51; Urban, *Moscow and the Italian Communist Party*, 185.
[39] Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 103-4, 129.
[40] Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 140.

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end, the Communists compromised a great deal with their governing coalition partners, particularly the DC. Though they succeeded in gaining a high degree of parliamentary sovereignty, and thus few impediments to any future left majority government's policy objectives, they gave in to DC demands for regional government, an upper chamber, an independent judiciary, and the reaffirmation of the 1929 Concordat with the church recognizing Catholicism as the state religion.[41] Clearly elements within the DC and other political forces were worried about future left, and specifically Communist, voter appeal and were keen to include constitutional recourses to resist any potential parliamentary left majority, particularly one dominated by the Communists. The DC and right wing parties also explored a host of non-constitutional reforms to achieve their ends including PR and compulsory voting, the latter initiative described by one contemporary commentator as a measure to counter the "zeal of left wing voters."[42] In the end left opposition pretty much eliminated compulsory voting but all parties agreed on the need for proportional representation. PR appeared to flow logically from the resistance-era period of cross-party cooperation, and the Communists, keen to remain within the rubric of a broad progressive alliance, readily agreed to it. But the potential strength of the left was never far from being a central factor in any consideration of voting rules.[43]

Many commentators have suggested that PR appeared a 'natural' response to the instability of the times given that no political group could be certain of their electoral strength.[44] But the response was less natural than a clear-headed appraisal of the political relationships that existed between the emerging mass parties. For the left, PR would assure that Socialists and Communists would not split their vote. Though there was

[41] Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 129.
[42] Clifford A.L. Rich, "The Permanent Crisis of Italian Democracy," *Journal of Politics*, 14:4 (November 1952), 665.
[43] Mario Einaudi, "Political Change in France and Italy," *American Political Science Review*, 40:5 (October 1946), 904, 908; Rich, "The Permanent Crisis of Italian Democracy," 665.
[44] Amoroso, "Italy," 141; Seton-Watson, "Italy," 110; Ulrich, "Historiography, Sources and Methods for the Study of Electoral Laws in Italy," 330.

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serious talk of uniting the two large left parties, they could not complete the negotiations before the first electoral contest and as such competed for election to the Constituent Assembly separately. For the right, PR would limit the damage that a majority system might inflict on them as a result of a decisive left victory and could increase their influence in the event that the left failed to reach a majority. For socially progressive centrists in the DC, PR would increase their chances of playing a pivotal role in postwar government, limiting some of the left's centralizing proclivities, providing the left did not win an outright majority.[45] An all-party committee examining voting systems deliberated through the fall of 1945, submitting a report in November essentially calling for a return to the PR system introduced in 1919. The American-dominated Allied Control Council raised no objections to the return to PR, commenting that draft electoral law was "in keeping with modern developments in democratic practice." The final law was put in place in March 1946 in time for the first postwar national elections set for June.[46]

In the 1946 constituent assembly elections a centre-left majority stretching from the Communists to the Christian Democrats emerged committed to sweeping social and economic changes. As in France, the US poured money into Italy to shore up conservative political forces and fuel dissent in the ranks of the centre-left. Yet American efforts in Italy were in a class of their own, representing the first major covert operation for American intelligence in peacetime.[47] The breakthrough for the Americans came in May 1947 when they finalized a secret deal with de Gasperi, the leader of the DC, that would see him expel the Communists from his governing coalition in return for US

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[45] As Di Palma makes clear, these calculations informed all of the constitutional debates of the period, and the struggles over the interpretations of the constitution that followed. See Di Palma, "The Available State: Problems of Reform," 150-2.

[46] Einaudi, "Political Change in France and Italy," 903-4.

[47] Filippelli, *American Labor and Postwar Italy, 1943-1953*, 131; Forsyth, "The peculiarities of Italo-American relations in historical perspective," 2.

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economic aid.[48] The subsequent announcement of the Marshall Plan only days later was clearly part of these negotiations, though the timing was meant to allow the DC to take credit for the better economic times that would follow. But the US did not limit their efforts to this. After all, the various US interventions had not managed to split the Italian left. In fact, the Communist and Socialist parties were closer than ever and had forged an agreement to run as a joint slate in the coming contest, a factor many commentators thought would improve their prospects. As President Truman feared the Communists might win the 1948 elections, the US state intervened aggressively in the election campaign with both overt and covert operations.[49] Historian Paul Ginsborg suggests that "American intervention was breath-taking in its size, its ingenuity and its flagrant contempt for any principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of another country." The US administration immediately designated $176 million of interim aid to Italy in the first three months of 1948, after which the Marshall Plan kicked in. Local US representatives made sure that the arrival of American supplies received extensive coverage in the media, just to underscore the good intentions of the west.[50] But US officials also repeatedly warned Italian voters that a Communist victory would spell doom for the country's economy and the future of American economic aid. At the covert

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[48] Eley, "Back to the Beginning: European Labor, U.S. Influence, and the Start of the Cold War," 102; Donald Sassoon, *The Strategy of the Italian Communist Party*, (London: Frances Pinter, 1981), 60. The DC's tight relationship with Washington would keep both overt and covert aid money flowing into the country well into the 1970s. See E. Timothy Smith, *The United States, Italy and Nato, 1947-52*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 35, 41.

[49] Forsyth, "The peculiarities of Italo-American relations in historical perspective," 14-5. Specific details of the many American plans are sketched out in James E. Miller, "Taking Off the Gloves: The United States and the Italian Elections of 1948," *Diplomatic History*, 7:1 (Winter 1983), particularly 42-3, 45-52.

[50] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 115. American attempts to influence Italian attitudes took many turns. Wagstaff reports how thousands of Hollywood films were distributed in Italy throughout 1945-6 by the Psychological Warfare Branch of the US Army, dumping them at prices that local film-makers and distributors could not match. See Christoper Wagstaff, "Italy in the Post-war International Cinema Market," in Duggan and Wagstagg (eds.), *Italy in the Cold War: Politics, Culture and Society 1948-58*, 93.

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level, the CIA and the American state department funneled money to a host of parties and organizations opposed to the Communists.[51]

In the end, the DC won an impressive victory - 48% of the popular vote and a majority of seats. The left, by contrast, stumbled badly. Running on a joint ticket the PCI and PSI gained only 31%, down 8% from their combined support in 1946 when they ran separately. The left defeat reflected a number of developments they could not effectively anticipate or respond to: the rise of virulent western anti-communism, the DC's ability to cast themselves as both reformist and traditional, and the high level of American aid - both overt and covert - to the centre-right parties. But it also reflected the economic and social organization of the country, one characterized by highly uneven development, low levels of urbanization, and lingering economic insecurity in rural areas. Left support remained high in urban areas, particularly in the north, but slipped in central Italy, and failed to take hold at all in the largely undeveloped south. That left Italy's still predominantly rural population under the influence of traditional community leaders like the church, landowners and now, by extension, their chosen political party, the DC.[52] In fact, arguably key to the DC's success as a national party was its ability to mimic the mass party form of the left in the centre and north while absorbing the clientelist networks of the traditional right in the south.[53] This was possible, according to Percy

[51] Filippelli reports that 10 million US dollars were secretly diverted from the economic stabilization fund to aid American interventions in the 1948 election, involving "pay for local election campaigns, anti-Communist propaganda, and bribes." The US also prepared contingency plans involving the use of military force in the event of a Communist victory. See Filippelli, *American Labor in Postwar Italy, 1943-1953*, 131; as well as James E. Miller, *The United States and Italy, 1940-1950: The Politics and Diplomacy of Stabilization*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 248; Forsyth, "The peculiarities of Italo-American relations in historical perspective," 2, 14; Smith, *The United States, Italy and Nato, 1947-52*, 35; and Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 116.

[52] Alberto Martinelli, "Organized Business and Italian Politics: Confindustria and the Christian Democrats in the Postwar Period," in Lange and Tarrow (eds.), *Italy in Transition*, 72; Sidney Tarrow, "Italy: Crisis, Crises or Transition?" in Lange and Tarrow (eds.), *Italy in Transition*, 174.

[53] While mass parties on the left tried to make inroads into southern Italy in the 1940s, and did in fact make some progress, the poll for working class parties in the 1946 constituent assembly elections in the south was less than half of their total in the north (21% versus 52%). Meanwhile the DC's organization allowed it to move into previous Liberal party territory in the south without really challenging the traditional clientelistic

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Allum, because the DC was a special form of mass party, comprising a party elite and a mass base connected indirectly through Catholic mobilizing organizations, a much more flexible arrangement than the more centralized left parties.[54]

The depth of the left's poor showing surprised everyone, including the left. They spent most of the end of the 1940s and early 1950s trying to get back into government, convinced that a majority of the populace supported their agenda of social and political reforms.[55] Certainly the DC had sounded like they supported many of the broad social reform aims during the constituent assembly negotiations. Reformers on the left of the DC had been key in drafting the social commitments in the recently approved constitution, a document that received full public support from the DC leadership.[56] But their impressive single party majority victory, the only one in the history of Italian democracy (excluding the Fascist gerrymander), along with the local effects of the Cold War and the changing nature of their voting support, moved the DC to shift their electoral strategy.[57] The electoral weakness of the left certainly put few apparent restraints on the DC's actions. Under the influence of the US, the Catholic hierarchy, and Italy's business lobby group Confindustria, the DC embarked on a majoritarian strategy that included abandoning their social commitments, committing Italy to a western defence alliance, and reversing their pre-constitution commitments to decentralization and proportionality.[58]

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system of power. See P.A. Allum, "The South and National Politics, 1945-50," in S.J. Woolf (ed.), *The Rebirth of Italy 1943-50*, (Aylesbury: Longmans, 1972), 106-7.

[54] However, this initial organizational advantage would prove troublesome for DC elites when those same Catholic organizations attempted to direct party - and by extension government - policy. This contributed to the DC's increasing use of state power for political purposes from the mid-1950s on precisely to limit Catholic influence over the political class. See Percy Allum, "The Challenging Face of Christian Democracy," in Duggan and Wagstaff (eds.), *Italy in the Cold War: Politics Culture and Society 1948-58*, 121-2, 124-5.

[55] Rich, "The Permanent Crisis of Italian Democracy," 676.

[56] Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 144-5.

[57] Rich, "The Permanent Crisis of Italian Democracy," 665-6.

[58] There was debate within the DC about this shift to the right and away from a neutral foreign policy but in the aftermath of the 1948 election victory this faction lost much of its influence (regaining it only with the shift to the left in the 1960s). See Robert Leonardi and Douglas E. Wertman, *Italian Christian Democracy:*

Now that the extent of left support had been exposed and found wanting, the DC felt more confident about their chances under a form of majority voting rules. DC leaders also saw an opportunity to impose some discipline on the smaller parties that they had to rely on as well as the fractious factions within the party.[59]

The cornerstone of the DC's new direction was the implementation of a new voting law, one that mirrored Mussolini's infamous majoritarian gerrymander in everything but scope. Under the new rules, any party or alliance of parties that received more than fifty percent of the vote would receive a bonus, pushing them up to 65% of the total representation, a comfortable working majority, while other parties would share out what was left proportionately. Some voting system reform along these lines had already occurred at the local level, with the result that the DC could rule alone in some cases, and DC leaders could more effectively control their many factions.[60] While the DC already had a majority of seats at the national level, even they recognized that their record 48% of the popular vote would probably decline in coming elections so majorities in the future were far from assured. At the level of public discourse, the DC attempted to defend what amounted to a blatant gerrymander as a much-needed reform designed to help stabilize Italian democracy.[61] But given the scope of their recent impressive victory, one that nearly captured a majority of Italian voting support, their rationale appeared weak and

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The Politics of Dominance, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 54-5; Ginsborg, A History of Contemporary Italy, 158.

[59] Sassoon, The Strategy of the Italian Communist Party, 87-9. At the same time, De Gasperi moved to weaken the influence of factions within his party with the introduction of a four-fifths majority rule at party conventions. See Leonardi and Wertman, Italian Christian Democracy, 59.

[60] Norman Kogan, A Political History of Italy: The Postwar Years, (New York: Praeger, 1983), 62.

[61] James R. Thayer, "The Contribution of Public Opinion Polls to the Understanding of the 1953 Election to Italy, West Germany and Japan," Public Opinion Quarterly, 19:3 (Autumn 1955), 260. Unlike Thayer, subsequent scholarly commentators have largely accepted the DC's stated rationale at face value, including Seton-Watson, "Italy," 116; and Ulrich, "Historiography, Sources and Methods for the Study of Electoral Laws in Italy," 332-4

self-serving. In fact, as was clear to everyone, the majority law was designed primarily to assure the left remained marginal and unthreatening.[62]

For their part, the left throughout this period, particularly the PCI, stuck diligently to strictly democratic confrontation. The Communists quickly discovered the benefits of political decentralization, and argued that the 1948 constitutional settlement implied a consociational, rather than majoritarian, democratic practice. All parties should actively participate in governing, they argued, and Communists took seriously the work of parliament, amending legislation and proffering contributions of their own. In truth, the left had little choice.[63] Though the lightning mobilization of approximately nine million former partisans after the attempt on PCI leader Togliatti's life in 1948 suggested the potential brute strength of the left forces, a force that might easily have taken over northern Italy in 1943-44, the situation was changed by the late forties and early fifties.[64] Not only was the state stronger militarily, but left support was hindered everywhere by the pervasive effects of unemployment and state repression. The Cold War and American funding for right-wing unionists had helped fracture the Italian labour movement into three separate confederations in 1948 and the economic conditions kept unions weak and dependent on their political party sponsors.[65]

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[62] However, DC leaders were concerned about their ability to maintain hegemony in the political system, especially in light of local election results in 1951 and 1952 that suggested the party was losing ground to both the left and right, and Di Scala argues that this fueled De Gasperi's interest in the voting system reform. See Spencer Di Scala, *Renewing Italian Socialism: Nenni to Craxi,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 86.

[63] Hellman, "Italian Communism in the First Republic," 74-5; Di Palma, "The Available State: Problems of Reform," 151, 154.

[64] Tom Behan, " 'Going Further': The Aborted Italian Insurrection of July 1948," *Left History,* 3.2/4.1 (Fall 1995/Spring 1996), 168-204; Claudin, *The Communist Movement,* 477-8. Behan is not so sure that the 'aborted' insurrection would have failed.

[65] Miller, *The United States and Italy, 1940-1950,* 256-63; Marino Regini, "Labour Unions, Industrial Action and Politics," in Lange and Tarrow (eds.), *Italy in Transition,* 50; Romero, *The United States and the European Trade Union Movement, 1944-1951,* chapter 5, "Divisions and Realignments: The Italian Case," 138-174.

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However the left did organize considerable legislative and extra-parliamentary opposition on two issues in this period: Italy's entrance into NATO, and the adoption of the new voting law. The DC, like all the other parties, had campaigned in 1948 to keep Italy neutral in the emerging superpower polarization.[66] But perhaps because they felt they had the upper hand after the election, and certainly in response to American pressure, the DC leadership decided to accelerate the country's integration into the US orbit by accepting membership in NATO and the establishment of American military bases in Italy. Though the left ultimately failed to block either initiative, they did mobilize considerable public opposition to them, particularly the voting reform. Dubbed the 'swindle law' by its critics, the left hammered home how similar the new law was to the previous fascist law, successfully tarring its sponsors as 'authoritarian.'[67] Polling from the period revealed that voter knowledge of the new system was low and that few supported the change, which only confirmed the elite nature of the proposal. In fact, given the choice, most voters regardless of party preferred the 1946 PR system.[68] De Gasperi defended the reform as necessary to sustain Italian democracy against challenges from its internal enemies. In his view, Italy's special needs required a 'protected democracy,' including not just electoral engineering but exceptional laws limiting civil liberties and extending police powers. After a bitter struggle the DC succeeded in adopting the new voting system but failed to reap the majoritian bonus in the 1953 election, falling short by just 57,000 votes.[69]

DC elites were disturbed at how the new system appeared to become a key campaign issue and worried that the repeated charges of authoritarianism from the left

[66] Smith, *The United States, Italy and Nato, 1947-52*, 57.
[67] Hellman, "Italian Communism in the First Republic," 74; Seton-Watson, "Italy," 116; Grindrod, *The Rebuilding of Italy*, 83-4; Smith, *The United States, Italy and Nato, 1947-52*, 94-5.
[68] Thayer, "The Contribution of Public Opinion Polls to the Understanding of the 1953 Election to Italy, West Germany and Japan," 262.
[69] Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, 142-3. The DC and its allies gained 49.85% of the popular vote.

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might stick in the public mind, casting the party too far from the centre and risking their control of the political system. The reform was also unpopular with the smaller centrist parties that the DC needed if they were to avoid having to form coalitions with the far right (in fact, the defection of some of their centre allies was one reason the DC failed to make the threshold).[70] In retaliation, the centre refused to join a new De Gasperi administration and the postwar hero of the right was forced to step down.[71] Meanwhile, the PSI had begun running local slates separately from the Communists in some locales, particularly those using PR. This moved the breakaway Socialists in the small Social Democratic Party to pressure the DC to repeal the bonus system.[72] As such, under pressure from their centrist allies, and with an eye to perhaps splitting the Socialists off from their Communist partners, the DC abandoned their majoritarian strategy both within and outside the party, agreeing to repeal the bonus majority system in 1954 and return to the postwar system of PR, a decision that would remain unchallenged for over two decades.[73]

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[70] Grindrod, The Rebuilding of Italy, 83, 90; Kogan, A Political History of Italy, 64-5.

[71] Smith, The United States, Italy and Nato, 1947-52, 172.

[72] Di Scala, Renewing Italian Socialism, 87, 99.

[73] Gianfranco Pasquino, "That Obscure Object of Desire: A New Electoral Law for Italy," in Noiret (eds.), Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms: Origins of Voting Systems in Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries, 465; Di Palma, "The Available State: Problems of Reform," 152. Besides, the manipulation of the voting system was not the only option open to the DC in maintaining their hegemony. A number of scholars highlight how the Italian courts played a key role in negating some of the more radical elements of the postwar constitutional settlement, and through a series of decisions in the 1940s worked against the left more generally. Meanwhile, with control over the state, the DC stalled throughout the 1950s and 1960s in bringing into force various aspects of the constitution that might have offered some space to challenge their control. All this lends credence to Poulantzas' insight that the state offers many arenas for the powerful to pursue their interests, even if one locale (i.e. parliament) falls under more popular control. See Christopher Duggan, "Italy in the Cold War Years and the Legacy of Fascism," in Duggan and Walstaff (eds.), Italy in the Cold War: Politics, Culture and Society 1948-58, 4-5; Kogan, A Political History of Italy: The Postwar Years, 105; Ginsborg, A History of Contemporary Italy, 100; and Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, 138-9.

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France

French reforms of the immediate postwar period also reflected the legacy of resistance-era coalitions and the new popularity of the left and general public acceptance of its ideas, specifically as concerned nationalizations and social security.[74] Communists particularly were held in high esteem, both for their leadership in resisting the Nazis and due to the war-earned prestige of the Soviet Union. As Donald Sassoon notes, everywhere Communists were considered the 'bravest of the brave' for their daring work and sacrifices in the underground resistance movement. In addition, their unwavering focus on defeating the Nazis, to the exclusion of economic or political questions, earned them the respect of non-leftists, clearly establishing their credentials as patriotic national defenders.[75] Even with the end of war, the Communists largely eschewed social and economic demands, urging workers to increase production and get the economy back on track before seeking wage gains and social improvements. As in Italy, the French Communists (PCF) were keen to sustain a popular democratic alliance that would drive out fascism and eliminate the anti-democratic reactionary forces within France.[76] In this, unity was more easily achieved as the French collaborators with the Nazis at Vichy -

[74] Richard F. Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 202, 205.
[75] Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 91, 93; Andrew Shennan, *Rethinking France: Plans for Renewal 1940-1946*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 93.
[76] Claudin, *The Communist Movement*, 330-2. The reputation of the Communist role in the resistance and the initial public goodwill toward the Soviet Union at the war's end also contributed to a strong movement within the Socialist Party in favour of close links with the PCF, either as part of a new political party drawn from the resistance forces or through a fusion of the two traditional parties of the left. See B.D. Graham, *The French Socialists and Tripartism 1944-1947*, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1965), 99; and B.D. Graham, *Choice and Democratic Order: The French Socialist Party, 1937-1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 265. On economic issues, numerous authors have pointed out that Socialists in many countries were forwarding more radical demands than Communists in this period. For East Germany, see Phillips, *Soviet Policy Towards East Germany*, 35; for Italy and France, see Donald Sassoon, "The Rise and Fall of West European Communism, 1938-1948," *Contemporary European History*, 1:2 (1992), 145, 147; and more generally see Kolko, *The Politics of War*, 5-6, 33; and Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 89-91.

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forces that included most of the business community and the traditional right-wing parties - were stymied in their efforts to rehabilitate themselves.[77] Unlike the Italian fascist remnants that propped themselves in power between the resistance and the invading allies, Vichy could offer little to Allied forces and only posed a threat to de Gaulle's claim to leadership.[78] As the Allies advanced into France de Gaulle approached cooperation with the left - even the Communists - pragmatically, recognizing he would have to work with them to establish a new civil administration and consolidate his influence.[79]

When finally ensconced back in France in 1944, de Gaulle faced the dilemma of attempting to forge ahead with his own personal brand of reformism, particularly his penchant for a strong presidency, or reckoning with the concerns - and potential power - of the resistance parties. When it came to voting systems, de Gaulle now preferred the single member plurality approach because it would award decisive victory to the leading candidate. His constitutional advisor Michel Debray called for a return to the Third Republic second ballot system, modified to allow the leading party to win all the seats in a multi-member constituency. But the biggest resistance parties - the Communists, Socialists, and recently formed Christian democrats (known as the MRP in France) - were united in demanding proportional representation.[80] To some extent the issues were the same as in Italy. The parties were unsure of their electoral strength and none wanted to risk coming up on the wrong side of an all-or-nothing majority-style electoral contest.[81] Like their cousins in the Italian PCI, the PCF viewed PR both as an extension of the

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[77] Anderson, *Conservative Politics in France*, 75; Shennan, *Rethinking France: Plans for Renewal 1940-1946*, 79; Remond, *The Right Wing in France*, 318.
[78] Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 114-5.
[79] Kolko, *The Politics of War*, 76; Claudin, *The Communist Movement*, 326. In fact, de Gaulle even welcomed the re-establishment of political parties, despite his distaste for them, to counter the organizational strength of the Communists in the resistance movement. See Gildea, *France Since 1945*, 33.
[80] Einaudi, "Political Change in France and Italy," 900.
[81] Francois Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1952), 61.

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resistance coalition and a means of assuring they would not be marginalized. The French Socialists (SFIO) also heralded PR to further left unity, prevent vote splitting, and allow some distance to remain between themselves and their resistance partner to the left, just as activists in the PSI were doing.[82] And the new Christian democrat MRP, like the DC in Italy, also understood PR as means of assuring a key role for more centre-left reformers.[83]

But there were factors related specifically to the legacy of voting system manipulation in the Third Republic and electoral competition in France that influenced the decision as well. A consensus had emerged across the political spectrum in favour of PR just before the war, with the lower house passing a bill in favour of adopting in 1939 (though it was later defeated in the Senate).[84] The French left had long advocated the adoption of a real PR system, as opposed to the limited form used for two elections after WWI. Neither the PCF nor the SFIO would countenance a return to the Second Ballot of the prewar regime.[85] Not only would the Second Ballot make left unity more difficult, as it had before the war, but both parties blamed the system for weakening parties and maintaining the influence of local notables in national politics.[86] The MRP was also concerned about the power of local members in any new voting system arrangements. As a new party, the MRP would have few 'notables' or well-known local candidates. But more to the point for the MRP as Christian democrats, they thought the Second Ballot would encourage polarization around economic issues that would bury clerical concerns.

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[82] Graham, *The French Socialists and Tripartism 1944-1947*, 65.

[83] Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections Since 1789*, 103; Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 138.

[84] Goguel, *France under the Fourth Republic*, 60.

[85] Besides prewar complaints, the postwar consensus for PR was also influenced by the extensive committee work and reports prepared by Free France expatriates in London and Northern Africa during the war, particularly the contributions of Socialist members. See Shennan, *Rethinking France: Plans for Renewal 1940-1946*, 112-15, 125; Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, 59-60.

[86] Goldey and Williams, "France," 71; Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 144. Concerns about the party system appear prominently in the Free France documents. See Shennan, *Rethinking France: Plans for Renewal 1940-1946*, 112-15, 125; Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, 59-60.

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By contrast, with PR religious issues would be represented and not so easily marginalized.[87] Thus all three of the major resistance-era parties valued PR over the Second Ballot as the latter risked restoring some of the power of the now discredited traditional players and polarizing politics in a way that could hurt each one of the partners.[88] In the end, de Gaulle went with PR, mostly for fear that the Communists might end up first-past-the-post under his preference. And given that the purpose of the first election was to establish a constituent assembly PR made also sense from the point of view of representing the nation. Yet in a sop to its critics, the 1945 version of PR was still a more limited form than many of its European counterparts, with the allocation of seats occurring only at the departmental level instead of a national one.[89]

The outcome of France's first postwar national election delivered an outright majority of seats to the parties of the left: the PCF and SFIO. Technically, de Gaulle still headed the government and the Constituent Assembly was supposed to be focused on designing a new constitution rather than holding government actions to account. But de Gaulle had no party - deliberately so as he called for a politics of government that was above parties - and he soon found that his cabinet, a mixture of resistance party

[87] Robert G. Neumann, "The Struggle for Electoral Reform in France," *The American Political Science Review*, 45:3 (September 1951), 741; Roy Pierce, "The French Election of January 1956," *The Journal of Politics*, 19:3 (August 1957), 396-7. The MRP also had an historic interest in PR, as in its previous, more conservative incarnations, Catholic parties in the 1930s also supported the reform. See Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, 59-60.

[88] The PCI worried about being cut off from the Socialists, the SFIO were concerned about being stuck with the Communists and cut off from the MRP, and Christian Democrats feared that a Communist/anti-Communist polarization would force them to the right, thus limiting their ability to work with the left on their social objectives. See Goguel, *France and the Fourth Republic*, 61-2.

[89] Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 138; Goguel, *France and the Fourth Republic*, 61. De Gaulle's modifications sparked complaints from the parties participating in his advisory body, the Consultative Assembly, who complained that such an "unfair, bastard system of representation" would primarily benefit the more conservative, rural areas. Angry that the Consultative Assembly's more proportional model had been rejected by the provisional Cabinet in favour a more conservative proposal "prepared on de Gaulle's instructions," rank and file members of the SFIO voiced support for the Communist's challenge of the provisional government itself. The SFIO leadership, worried about the influence of their pro-Communist left, tried to respond by urging de Gaulle to reconsider, but to no avail. See Graham, French Socialists and Tripartism 1944-1947, 95; and Graham, *Choice and Democratic Order: The French Socialist Party, 1937-1950*, 278-9. The references to allocation at the 'departmental level' refers to the administrative division of the country into smaller regional units.

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representatives and others, was increasingly divided along party lines. Disgusted, de Gaulle surprised everyone by quitting politics in January 1946, opening the way for the first elected civilian administration to take power in a decade. At first PCF leader Maurice Thorez attempted to form a left government with the Socialists but the latter, fearing absorption by the larger, better organized left party, insisted on a broader coalition that would include the MRP. Meanwhile, the MRP refused to serve under a Communist premier and suggested a Socialist head the government. Despite being the largest party, the PCF acquiesced and a tripartite government of the centre-left came to power under a Socialist PM.[90]

The new administration acted quickly to introduce a host of progressive legislation and nationalize key industries, suggesting that the 'moment of antifascist possibility' might be at hand.[91] However, the government soon split on its constitutional proposals. The PCF and SFIO proposed a unicameral parliament, much like the one they were presently governing, with elections conducted by PR but with a national allocation replacing the less proportional departmental formula used in 1945. Given the anti-democratic character of the Senate in the Third Republic, the left were keen to move to a British-style system of parliamentary supremacy that would see power exercised by strong, disciplined parties.[92] The national allocation of PR would more correctly represent the big parties and the proposal also included a five percent threshold to limit the rise of any Weimar-style small parties (one of de Gaulle's concerns with a national

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[90] Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic 1944-1958*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 97-8; Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 139-40; Graham, *The French Socialists and Tripartism 1944-1947*, 138. On the Communists superior electoral organization, see Graham, *Choice and Democratic Order: The French Socialist Party, 1937-1950*, 329.

[91] Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France*, 201; Irwin M. Wall, "The French Social Contract: Conflict amid Cooperation," *International Journal of Labor and Working Class History*, 50 (Fall 1996), 117-8.

[92] Einaudi, "Political Change in France and Italy," 904-5; Goldey and Williams, "France," 70. While a number of writers see in these left proposals some ominous jacobin or totalitarian design, others note the influence of British institutions (where a number of expatriate French politicians spent the war) on their thinking. See Shennan, *Rethinking France: Plans for Renewal 1940-1946*, 139.

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allocation). If left proposals for unicameralism and a party-centred democracy were consistent across Europe, so was the opposition to them coming from Christian Democratic parties. In Italy the DC complained that the left's proposals would risk turning parliament into a 'committee for public safety,' while in France the MRP worried about a dictatorship of parties controlling both the legislature and civil society.[93]

As the governmental allies could not agree, it appeared the public would be the final arbiter. In 1945 de Gaulle had insisted that the new constitution be submitted to a public vote, motivated in part by concern about the strength of the Communists and the role they might play in the process. The Socialists and MRP agreed for similar reasons.[94] With an outright majority of seats the left could disregard their centrist coalition partner's concerns and put their unicameral option directly to the public in a referendum in May 1946. It failed, though narrowly, with voting patterns for the left constitution faithfully reproduced a month later in elections for a new constituent assembly - 47% for the PCF and SFIO. Only a bare majority turned down the unicameral option. Six months later a paltry 38% would approve the new proposed constitution, but with 31% opposed and 31% abstaining it passed on a split vote.[95] Though the key divisive issue in the left's failed constitutional proposal was unicameralism and not the proposed change to a national allocation of PR, the choice of voting system and its details were left out of the new constitution. Yet none of the major parties moved to make a change at this time. The 1945-6 constitutional negotiations had been characterized by mutual suspicion and strategic calculation on the part of the tripartite partners, with each group attempting to concede as little as possible. Thus the 1945 departmental PR system remained in force.[96]

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[93] Einaudi, "Political Change in France and Italy," 905, 908.
[94] Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 137-7.
[95] Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 142.
[96] O.R. Taylor, *The French Fourth Republic*, (London: Royal Institute or International Affairs, 1951), 16.

Yet the debate over the voting system in France was quickly taken up with the post-1947 developments in Europe. The Cold War altered politics across Europe by expanding the incentives to remake the liberation-era coalitions. Anti-communism helped the discredited forces of the right regain their political footing and credibility, increasing their influence in public debate and a variety of political parties. The recently formed Christian Democratic parties, clearly centre-left forces in the immediate postwar period, increasingly began to feel the pull of a right wing electorate and American influence. By 1947, particularly in Germany and Italy, Christian Democrats shifted decisively to the right, breaking publicly with the centre-left postwar consensus and eschewing cooperation with the left.[97] Left unity was also under strain. Given that centre-left governments faced seemingly intractable problems in rebuilding their economies and providing for their citizens, American promises of aid proved attractive to political forces on both the left and right. Meanwhile American support for the anti-Communist left fueled debates within the left about the future of unity between Communists and Socialists, contributing to splits in Italy and France.[98] By late spring 1947 the liberation-era coalitions had been sundered, with the left pushed out of government in Italy and the Communists forced out in France.[99]

The remaking of political coalitions across Europe also contributed to a revival of voting system reform, though the nature of the political split in various countries influenced the timing of the process. In Italy, as the left forged a stronger electoral pact and the centre-right could not be sure of their political strength, PR remained uncontested in the run-up to the 1948 election. Basically, the bipolar nature of political competition

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[97] Leonardi and Wertman, *Italian Christian Democracy*, 45-6, 54-7; Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 144-5, 159.

[98] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 302-3; Filippelli, *American Labor and Postwar Italy, 1943-1953*, 95-6, 131-2.

[99] In some cases the promised economic aid came with astonishing rapidity, as when the World Bank paid out $250 million in loans to France just four days after the PCF were pushed out of the French government. See John L. Harper, *America and the Reconstruction of Italy, 1945-1948*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 127.

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between left and right in Italy made moves away from PR risky.[100] But in France, where the split had divided the left and buttressed the political centre, discussion of constitutional and electoral reform quickly re-emerged. For some, PR no longer appeared necessary to sustain centre-left unity, while for others PR was no longer required to contain a potential left majority. The new governing bloc could see advantages in voting systems that would push voters toward the centre, while the traditional centre- right - galvanized by the break in left-wing unity - also pushed for electoral and parliamentary reforms.[101] However, unlike Italy, the French centre could not subordinate the right. The return of de Gaulle to active political life at this time, and his sponsorship of a political movement keen to overhaul the existing constitution, meant that the government faced opposition on both the left and right. For their part, France's Christian democrats in the MRP, a key force in the new centrist coalition, opposed any efforts to diminish PR for fear that clerical issues might be sidelined.[102] Yet despite an apparent lack of consensus about alternatives, the electoral predicament of the centre government in France would keep electoral reform on the agenda throughout the next decade.

In both the French and Italian cases the state of the left would prove crucial to the timing and success of voting system reform. The different outcomes to the end of liberation-era centre-left government in 1947 had roots in the prewar experiences of the left in both countries. The French left had a long history of bitter electoral competition, with Communists and Socialists locked in suicidal, mutually destructive competition for most of the interwar period. Only when Communist voters deserted their party at the polls in 1932 did the relations between the two parties change.[103] And though their unity in the Popular Front led the left to victory in 1936, relations remained strained,

[100] Di Palma, "The Available State: Problems of Reform," 149-50.
[101] Neuman, "The Struggle for Electoral Reform in France," 742.
[102] Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic,* 67-70; Neuman, "The Struggle for Electoral Reform in France," 744-5.
[103] Goldey and Williams, "France," 69.

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particularly after a host of Socialists voted to make the Communist Party illegal in 1939 and then opted to join the reactionary Vichy regime in 1940. Even through the resistance, many Communists and Socialists remained wary of one another.[104] But in Italy both parties had suffered persecution and proscription under the Fascist regime and long worked together to overthrow it. Their organizations had strong links and throughout the late 1940s seriously considered a possible merger. American efforts to divide the Italian left accomplished little in 1947-8, eventually succeeding in hiving off only a small rump of the Socialist right wing into a separate Social Democratic party.[105] By contrast, in France Socialists were more evenly split on cooperation with the Communists, and as such more susceptible to continued American pressure. Cold War rhetoric then only intensified fears that some French Socialists had long harbored about their Communist allies. When the split came it was welcomed by many in the SFIO, though ultimately divisions on the French left destabilized the party system, creating space for new initiatives on the right and a shift away from the postwar centre-left policy consensus.[106]

Conventional accounts of French voting system reforms in the 1950s explain them both as a necessary response to the 'wrecking tactics' of extreme parties and as the means of preventing the election of a Weimar-style anti-system majority. According to these

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[104] D.S. Bell and Byron Criddle, *The French Socialist Party: Resurgence and Victory*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 127.

[105] Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 109; Urban, 16-7. Miller claims that serious divisions did emerge in the Italian left during this period, noting that a host of different Socialist groups competed locally in October 1947 in Rome. However, in the next sentence he notes that the key breakaway Social Democratic party did poorly in this contest, effectively undercutting his main point (though Miller blames their poor performance on PCI/PSI orchestrated 'violence'). See Miller, *The United States and Italy, 1940-1950*, 236.

[106] Younger militants in the Socialist party were particularly keen on close links with Communists and an orientation to political activism that highlighted working class struggle (as opposed to making an outreach to the middle classes). Their strength in the party led to the formation a joint SFIO/PCF committee to examine the possible fusion of the two parties in 1944. As the war drew to a close in France the PCF stepped up their campaign to merge the two left parties. Unity discussions dominated SFIO congresses in the summer of 1945 and 1946. For their part, Blum and the traditional SFIO leadership were wholly opposed to a merger with the Communists, though they were willing to work with them politically in the immediate postwar period. Yet Blum and his associates were not above playing up the Communist 'threat' to Americans to increase aid to France. See Graham, *Choice and Democratic Order: The French Socialist Party, 1937-1950*, 265, 268, 336; and Graham, *The French Socialists and Tripartism 1944-1947*, 65, 73, 99.

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commentators the political centre found itself short of allies as it could not embrace the Communists to the left or the various anti-Republican Gaullists to the right. Yet as municipal election results had demonstrated as early as 1947, the far left and right might plausibly attain a majority of seats in the National Assembly between them if voting patterns remained constant. Thus voting system reform emerged as the only obvious solution to these problems.[107] But this reading of the events dramatically underplays the choices available to the political players and the contexts influencing their decisions. For instance, both Communists and Gaullists repeatedly made overtures to the government to re-align the coalition to include them, but without success.[108] Ultimately, the narrow options faced by the centre parties had less to do with the behaviour of the political 'extremes' than the nature of the bargains they struck with each other and the American state. Voting system reform then proved a convenient way to maintain these arrangements rather than break or renegotiate them.

Arguably the key decision affecting the new centre government's political options involved their acceptance of the US-sponsored Marshall Plan of economic reconstruction. Of course, the influence of American money was hardly new in France. American money had poured into France in the immediate postwar period to bolster non-left organizing.[109] In 1946 US policy-makers had hinted to the respected SFIO leader Leon Blum when he visited Washington that more money would flow to France if the Communists were forced out of the government. And throughout the Spring of 1947 the French Socialist Premier struggled to find an excuse to dismiss the Communists from his government,

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[107] Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 165; Neuman, "The Struggle for Electoral Reform in France," 742; Goldey and Williams, "France," 71.

[108] Hanley, "France: Living with Instability," 56; Roy Pierce, "France Reopens the Constitutional Debate," *The American Political Science Review*, 46:2 (June 1952), 435-6; David S. Bell, "The French Communist Party: from revolution to reform," in Jocelyn A.J. Evans, *The French Party System*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 32-3.

[109] Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 300.

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primarily to placate the Americans who he feared might cut off aid to France.[110] But when the Marshall Plan was launched in June of 1947 these subtle directives became more explicit as nearly everyone could see how the initiative was directed against the Soviet Union, despite initially including them. In many countries parliamentary Socialists struggled with the American offer, often only agreeing to participate after much internal debate and anguish over the decision.[111] French Socialists were also deeply divided about the Marshall Plan and how it might prevent them from working with the Communist Party in future. Just a few months before the SFIO parliamentary leadership had only just barely won a party vote to remain in government after expelling the Communists.[112] Of course it was possible in the fluid political conditions of 1947 for Socialists to believe that conditions imposed today might be changed tomorrow - that US directives against the Communists might be weakened. But the Marshall Plan would prove a one-way street, fueling international economic and political relationships in such a way that any reconsideration would be very costly.[113]

Of course, local conditions - not just American influence - mattered in the outcome. Between 1947 and 1950 Socialist ambivalence toward the PCF tended to dissipate as the latter organized large scale strikes and public demonstrations against the centre government the SFIO initially led and then subsequently participated in. They and others would accuse the Communists of 'wrecking tactics' as the PCF repeatedly stalled

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[110] Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France*, 232; Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 154.

[111] Geir Lundestad, *America, Scandinavia and the Cold War 1945-1949*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 92: Jussi M. Hanhimaki, *Scandinavia and the United States, An Insecure Friendship*, (New York: Twayne Publishing, 1997), 24-5, 34; Helge Pharo, "The Cold War in Norwegian and International Historical Research," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 10:3 (1985), 166, 172.

[112] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic 1944-1958*, 126.

[113] As Federico Romero notes, "With Marshall aid European integration in fact became the 'interlocking concept in the American plan for Western Europe': it was seen as the key to the growth of western economic and political strength and thus to a favourable balance of power on the continent." See Romero, "Interdependence and Integration in American Eyes: From the Marshall Plan to Currency Convertibility," 156. For 'generous' view of the intentions behind the Marshall Plan, see Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). For a critique of this view, see Eley, "Back to the Beginning: European Labor, U.S. Influence, and the Start of the Cold War," 96-7.

legislation in both houses of parliament. But the Communists, no doubt angry at being shut out of government, also gave voice to considerable public frustration with the stalling of the post-war consensus, particularly on economic issues. Thus the public mobilizations were designed to force the government to re-admit them and move on the centre-left agenda that a majority of voters had endorsed in 1947.[114] Over the course of two years the anti-Communist forces within the SFIO eventually emerged victorious within the party through a combination of principled ('the Communists are not democratic') and pragmatic ('we cannot go back on Marshall Plan commitments') rhetoric, furthering their commitment to a centrist coalition strategy.[115] With the settlement of the German question by its division in 1949, East and Western Europe quickly fell into two wholly separate political territories under distinctly different imperial influence. The Marshall Plan had greased the political passage of the Cold War in western Europe by assuring that the centre-left coalitions of the immediate postwar period could not be easily re-assembled. The alleged 'wrecking tactics' of the French Communists had little influence either way. On a more covert level, American subsidies to the French Socialist party and its newspaper via the American Federation of Labour no doubt only reinforced their resolve to resist Communist calls for unity.[116]

The forced exit of the Communists required the governing coalition to expand by drawing more support from the centre or right of the political spectrum. However, unlike the Italian Christian Democrats the MRP could not take effective control of the new coalition or subordinate the other parties under their leadership because France's rural class structure had spawned a much more independent politics and the new party proved

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[114] D.S. Bell and Eric Shaw, *The Left in France: Towards a Socialist Republic*, (Nottingham: Spokesman, 1983), 133.
[115] See Frederick F. Ritsch, *The French Left and the European Idea, 1947-1949*, (New York: Pageant Press, 1966), 83-5, 108-11.
[116] Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 159.

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ill-equipped to adapt to changing circumstances.[117] Instead, the new coalition multiplied the potential for division in the new government by bringing in the traditionally anti-clerical Radical party.[118] Nor would the coalition look much further to the right, as the shift in the governing coalition had coincided with the return to politics of de Gaulle and his anti-Republican vehicle, the RPF. By August of 1947 de Gaulle's quasi-party had attracted immense public and media interest as well as a sizeable caucus in the National Assembly, drawn mostly from the ranks of conservative and centre-right parties. Though de Gaulle would later attempt to negotiate with the centrist government, his initial re-emergence was marked by stinging criticism of the republican regime and demands for immediate constitutional and parliamentary reform. As with the Communists, RPF supporters were vociferously critical of the centre government, attempting to block their initiatives in both the lower house and the Senate.[119]

The hostility of the new right and the various proscriptions against seeking support from the Communist left pushed the new centre government toward considering reforms that would buttress them politically. Arguments against PR specifically had been made by the Radicals during the Constituent Assembly negotiations, and de Gaulle's new RPF had made a return to the Second Ballot one of their key demands after their

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[117] The striking emergence of Christian democracy as a powerful electoral force across Europe's three largest countries after WWII tends to obscure some important differences in their social bases and competitive contexts. The DC managed to broker an effective urban/rural coalition in part because it absorbed the clientelistic networks that dominated the poor, particularly rural, Italian south. Italian Christian democracy also benefited from the undisputed Catholicism of the country and its privileged position constitutionally and in civil society. French rural areas, by contrast, were not so uniformly poor, and the small-holding peasantry wielded their political power more independently. In addition, the MRP were less pragmatic in their approach to Christian politics, refusing to truck with rural 'notables' or alter their Christian 'zeal' in the face of a much more secular electorate. On the DC, see Allum, "The South and National Politics, 1945-50," 106-7; on the MRP, see Richard Vinen, *Bourgeois Politics in France, 1945-51*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 166-7.
[118] Neuman, "The Struggle for Electoral Reform in France," 742.
[119] Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 156-7; Pierce, "France Reopens the Constitutional Debate," 435-6.

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municipal election successes in 1947.[120] But it was only with the end of tripartism and the marginalization of the Communists that voting system reform moved up the government's agenda. The first indication of a break with the postwar consensus on voting rules came when parliament voted to shift the method of indirect election for Senators away from one that essentially mirrored results in the lower house to one resembling prewar approaches, specifically to put the Communists at a disadvantage.[121] But reforming the lower house, where the balance of legislative and executive authority lay, would prove a more protracted and unpredictable struggle. Radicals and most conservatives hated the PR system and wanted a return to the Second Ballot system that had worked so well for them in the past. In fact, the reintroduction of the second ballot for Senate elections from non-urban areas very quickly led to Radical and conservative gains in the upper house.[122] But the MRP were adamantly opposed to moves away from PR. They feared that a return to the second ballot would marginalize clerical issues and only further polarize political competition.[123] Debate over voting system and constitutional reform continued throughout 1948-9, with little movement between the Radical and MRP positions. However, by 1950, with a national election within sight, and the new RPF gaining support from both parties, they began to shift. MRP members,

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[120] De Tarr, *The French Radical Party*, 49-50; Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, 51, 62-3. France also continued to use its traditional Second Ballot voting system throughout this period under certain circumstances, for local elections up to 1947 (and thereafter locally in towns with under 9000 citizens; towns with larger populations then used PR), and for elections to the Council of the Republic where only a single member was returned (i.e. from some of the smaller French colonies). Thus past electoral practices never totally faded from the public's or the parties' collective memories. See Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, 32, 64; Taylor, *The French Fourth Republic*, 24.

[121] The reformed Senate voting system combined PR in urban areas with majority voting in rural departments. For details see Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, 45-6; and Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 148. Not surprisingly, the PCF objected strenuously to a change that kept PR where the Communists were strong but eliminated it where they were weaker. For Communist objections see Dorothy Pickles, *French Politics: The First Years of the Fourth Republic*, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1953), 101.

[122] Pierce, "France Reopens the Constitutional Debate," 423; Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, 45-6.

[123] Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, 69.

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discouraged and depleted by defections to the RPF, passed a resolution at their 1950 convention agreeing to some form of voting system reform. Meanwhile Radical party leaders now recognized that MRP concerns had to be addressed for any reform proposal to move forward. Throughout these debates the Socialists had continued to support PR but also made it clear that they were open to alternatives, particularly the second ballot.[124] The centre coalition now agreed that some change was in order, though they still struggled over just what to replace PR with.

Throughout 1950-51 various voting system reform proposals vied for support in the National Assembly. The centre parties, now generally referred to as kind of 'third force' between left and right, were agreed that any reform would be aimed primarily at marginalizing the Communists and hopefully opening up more potential support for the government. The Socialists, Radicals and conservatives thought that a single member Second Ballot system would accomplish this but the MRP disagreed, worrying that they might lose run-offs to the RPF.[125] By contrast, the MRP called for various mixtures of PR and majority voting. But none of these efforts managed to gain enough support to pass both houses.[126] In fact, on February 21, 1950 no less than eight different voting system reform proposals were considered and defeated by either the Assembly or the Senate.[127] Negotiations for reform in this period were hindered by the stark decline in party discipline since the end of Communist participation in government. For a brief time the

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[124] Neuman, "The Struggle for Electoral Reform in France," 749; Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, 67-70.

[125] For the most part, the MRP opposed two ballot approaches, though they did propose one of their own, a multi-member second ballot system where the centre parties would appear together on the ballot, thus forcing supporters of one of the centre parties to support them all. The Socialists position on voting systems started to shift in the late 1940s from a firm commitment to proportional representation, to mixed PR/majority approaches aimed at disadvantaging the Communists, to support for a return to the Second Ballot system by 1949, led by Blum. See Neuman, "The Struggle for Electoral Reform in France," 743-4, 746-7; Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, 72; Pickles, *French Politics: The First Years of the Fourth Republic*, 114.

[126] Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, 70-1.

[127] Rioux, *The Fourth Republic 1944-1958*, 164; Pickles, *French Politics: The First Years of the Fourth Republic*, 130-1.

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Communist threat had forced parties away from the decentralizing pressures long present in French politics. In fact, the liberation-era centre-left consciously acted to buttress central government with their electoral and constitutional designs of 1945-6. But the Senate reforms of 1948 and return of the Radicals to pre-eminence weakened party discipline, reviving the influence of local notables in national affairs.[128] The national leaders of the MRP and Radical parties could not even assure that local branches would abide by election agreements to work with the Socialists, their governing ally.[129]

By late spring 1951, with an election just one month away, the National Assembly finally agreed on a new voting system for the lower house.[130] The MRP proposed a system that retained multi-member ridings and PR in a single ballot format, but added a majority element. Basically, the new rules would see any party or coalition of parties that gained a majority of the votes in a multi-member riding get all the seats available. If no party or coalition gained a majority, then seats would be distributed, as before, by PR. This proposal was clearly biased against the Communists as they had little hope of forming any alliances. But it would also limit the Gaullist RPF if the 'third force' parties could maintain their coalition for electoral purposes. As a safeguard against any local break in the ranks the government added a further twist, barring party coalitions from the ballot in the Paris region, the region where the PCI and RPF were the strongest. There could be little doubt that the government's new voting system amounted to little more than a gerrymander against their political opponents.[131] Voting results on the question confirmed its partisan character - the SFIO, MRP and Radicals were firmly in favour, while the PCF and the RPF were solidly opposed. Only the non-RPF right were split,

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[128] Goldey and Williams, "France," 65.
[129] Neuman, "The Struggle for Electoral Reform in France," 746.
[130] Though this too was controversial, with some claiming that the original motion had been defeated and then re-introduced by questionably constitutional means. See Neuman, "The Struggle for Electoral Reform in France," 749.
[131] Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 166-7.

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with about half supporting each side, reflecting perhaps relative measures of conservative hatred for both the Communists and the centre-government.[132] The new system then promptly delivered on its partisan promise, skewing the results of the 1951 election to the benefit of the third force parties. The French voting system reform of 1951 emerged from rather tortuous and uncertain negotiations amongst the governing parties, against a backdrop of historically-specific international political developments and national party competition. These contexts did not determine the results - indeed, voting system reform nearly did not happen before the 1951 elections - but they did give shape to the options as the different parties saw them.[133]

By 1951 the Cold War had thoroughly infused domestic politics across western countries, contributing to the rightward drift of social democratic and formerly centrist parties, while commitment to the Marshall Plan made a retreat to the left and Communist support very difficult. Voting system reform offered a way out of a potentially devastating bout of political competition for the third force parties, though the differing interests and competitive positions of the coalition parties nearly scuttled the deal. In the end, the voting system design adopted clearly acknowledged the fractious unity of the coalition by structuring rewards for centrist unity and disabling such rewards for their opponents and coalition defectors.

Though the centrist 'third force' parties had benefited as predicted from the rather convoluted new voting system they adopted just before the 1951 election, the results were embarrassingly one-sided and crude. The new system had clearly discriminated against the far left and right with representation that appeared to flout the public's voting intentions. The Communists and the Gaullist RPF were outraged by the results while few

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[132] Neuman, "The Struggle for Electoral Reform in France," 750.
[133] For a review of the negotiations see Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 165-7; and Neuman, "The Struggle for Electoral Reform in France," 742-50.

government members would publicly defend the system.[134] One contemporary observer described it as "the least honest system in French history" but others were more blunt dubbing it "bastard PR."[135] Not surprisingly, a new round of debate over voting system reform emerged in the National Assembly, with just as little consensus about an appropriate alternative. Complicating these negotiations were divisions within the 'third force' government over economic policy and constitutional issues. The marginalization of the Communists by the Socialists and MRP, subsequently reinforced by the government's commitment to the stipulations of the American Marshall plan, took pressure off the centre-right to cooperate on economic policy. The Socialists had brought down successive administrations before the 1951 election precisely because Radicals and Conservatives were pushing policy toward the right. But after the 1951 contest the Socialists themselves were marginalized and failed to return to the government benches. As they refused to work with the Communists, and could not seem to slow the drift of French government policy to the right, the Socialists ended up as isolated policy-wise as their former allies, despite the fact that a majority of voters in 1951 again supported the former progressive alliance of PCF, SFIO and MRP.[136] At the same time, de Gaulle's decision to withdraw from politics again, this time in protest about the lack of movement on constitutional reform, scattered the members of his RPF amongst other parties on the right and a more flexible new grouping, the Social Republicans. This sudden decline in political competition from both the left and right contributed to an increasing fragmentation of the centre along class and foreign policy lines.[137]

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[134] Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections Since 1789*, 123-4; Roy Pierce, "The French Election of January 1956," 397.

[135] Pickles, *French Politics: The First Years of the Fourth Republic*, 142; Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, 77.

[136] Goguel, *France Under the Fourth Republic*, 44; Pickles, *French Politics: The First Years of the Fourth Republic*, 144.

[137] Pierce, "The French Election of January 1956," 392.

By 1955 the centre coalition had split in two, unable to agree on economic policy or the correct response to social and political unrest in French possessions overseas. Meanwhile, evidence of a thaw in the relations between Socialists and Communists emerged as the two parties worked together at the local level in a few locales.[138] Amid a great deal of uncertainty, successive efforts were made to introduce a new voting system, including bids for PR, the Second Ballot, and other hybrid models, but all were defeated. Though no one really liked the status quo, no party or coalition seemed able to marshal the necessary support to change it. There were concerns within the centre-right government that the MRP, Socialists and Communists had the necessary votes to re-introduce the 1946 PR system if they worked together. As a result, the prime minister repeatedly used procedural methods to block all efforts at reform by the other parties. Meanwhile, his own government also wanted reform but could not agree amongst themselves what the best alternative might be. Finally a decision of sorts was made with the unexpected fall of the government in 1956. In a bid to block yet another effort at voting system reform, the PM declared the opposition motion a vote of confidence in the government. When the PM lost, he dissolved the Assembly, thus bringing back into play the very system that no one really wanted to use.[139]

The 1951 voting system reform was designed to benefit the centre at the expense of the far left and right, an objective it largely achieved in that instance. But by 1956 the centre had split into two loosely competing coalitions and the voting arrangements were to have decidedly different effects. The key wrinkle in the 1951 model was the bonus it awarded parties that could make effective electoral alliances - where any alliance gained a majority of the vote it would win all the seats in a district. But divisions within the centre meant that alliances did not win many majorities and the overall effect of the system was

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[138] Pierce, "The French Election of January 1956," 395.
[139] Pierce, "The French Election of January 1956," 397-8

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similar to the 1946 PR model. The failure of the centre meant that Communists won their proportionate share of seats, making them once again the largest single party in the National Assembly. But the proportionality of the results also allowed a new right-wing populist party, representing the tax grievances of farmers and small business and a pro-empire position on Algeria, to break into the political system at the expense of the more traditional forces of the centre-right and the remnants of de Gaulle's old RPF.[140] The 'anti-system party' majority that the reform was designed to limit appeared to be on the horizon anyway. Not surprisingly the new National Assembly quickly returned to the question of voting system reform, though the parties still could not agree on an alternative. The dwindling MRP sponsored a bill for PR that gained Communist support and passed in the lower house, only to be defeated in the Senate.[141] Despite many efforts, the normal pattern of party competition and coalition trade-offs did not seem able to produce any agreement on reform, despite near unanimous opposition to the status quo. The rural factor in France, like Italy, played a key role politically as both countries shared an uneven process of capitalist development and lower levels of urbanization than western averages. However, unlike Italy, centrist political forces in France could not dominate rural politics or the small business sector.[142] This was in part an unanticipated product of the economic restructuring brought on by the Marshal Plan and American pressure to open up the French economy. As the centre government moved to modernize the French economy, many of the traditional protections for rural farmers and small business were reduced or eliminated. These economic grievances, abetted by nationalist

[140] Pierce, "The French Election of January 1956," 411.
[141] Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections Since 1789*, 127.
[142] However, this was in the process of flux during the 1950s, as rural populations and their political power were in decline. France ended WWII with nearly half its population residing in rural areas and a third involved in agriculture, high figures compared to other western industrialized countries. Yet by the 1960s industrial development and migration to urban areas would bring it in line with western averages. For these trends, see J.-J. Carre, P. Dubois, and E. Malinvaud, *French Economic Growth*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 91, 94; and William G. Andrews, *Presidential Government in Gaullist France*, (Albany: State University of New York, 1982), 204-5.

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indignation with the decline of empire, eventually fueled a right-wing populist response that further limited the movement of the political centre.[143]

The break came with the constitutional crisis of 1958. Military leaders working with Gaullist politicians, frustrated with the waffling of the government in Paris over the future of Algeria, staged a rebellion and threatened to invade continental France unless their demands were met. To make clear their determination, they invaded and gained possession of the French island of Corsica. The military's efforts quickly polarized French society pushing the country to the brink of civil war, with many on the right not-so-secretly welcoming a military intervention.[144] Meanwhile, the Communists appeared to be the only party clearly stating their willingness to resist the army and protect the present state.[145] Though de Gaulle's knowledge of or involvement in the military's plans remains hotly debated, there is no denying that he responded to the crisis strategically, refusing to denounce the insurrection while at the same time offering his services as caretaker PM with emergency powers. Meanwhile the insurgents appeared to be stalling on their deadlines to invade based on how the government responded to calls to install de Gaulle. After a tense few weeks, de Gaulle negotiated a deal that would see himself installed as Prime Minister for a limited time with a mandate to prepare a new constitution that would be subject to a public vote. In what might be described as a voluntary *coup d'etat*, the centre surrendered government to de Gaulle under threat from the right and the military, but also out of a sense of frustration with the blocked nature of the political system. With a resurgent Communist party vying for a new popular front, and a militant right teetering toward insurrection, the centre hoped a populist general and war hero like de Gaulle would hold the country together through the crisis until such time

[143] Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France*, 249, 259, 269-70.
[144] Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 265-7. For a more extensive but still succinct review of these events see Phillip M. Williams, *Wars, Plots and Scandals in Postwar France*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), especially chapter 7, "The Fourth Republic: Murder or Suicide?" 129-66.
[145] Pierce, *French Politics and Political Institutions*, 45.

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as the centre could resume governing.[146] But de Gaulle had his own ideas. The crisis of 1958 was an opportunity to take up his long sought after constitutional changes to strengthen executive power, weaken the legislative branch, and marginalize the Communists.[147] Though the Gaullists claimed they sought only parliamentary reforms, a course of action the centre supported, a more grand set of plans were actually initiated when de Gaulle took power that would eventually include changes to the head of state, the relationship of the executive and the legislature, and the choice of voting system.

When de Gaulle was invested as PM in the spring of 1958 he was given strict guidelines, one of which explicitly removed the question of voting system change from his jurisdiction. But de Gaulle and his advisors managed to circumvent the prohibition through a constitutional sleight of hand. A minor clause in his proposals gave the provisional leadership the power to determine the voting system before the first election under the new constitution. Though the Communists campaigned against it, de Gaulle's constitution passed easily and he used his new powers to introduce a retooled version of France's traditional voting system, the Second Ballot.[148] He also had constituency boundaries redrawn to in such a way to discriminate against the Communists (though not the Socialists, who he wished to balance against some of his more right-wing support).[149] Both reforms accomplished their purpose - in the first elections under the new rules the Communists gained 19% of the vote but just 2% of the seats, while de Gaulle's supporters were over-represented, transforming 20% of the vote into 42% of the total seats. The 1958 reforms proved to be just the first in a series of institutional changes de

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[146] Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front*, 268; Gildea, *France Since 1945*, 43.

[147] Nicholas Wahl, "The French Constitution of 1958: II. The Initial Draft and Its Origins," *The American Political Science Review*, 53:2 (June 1959), 358.

[148] Pierce, *French Politics and Political Institutions*, 144; Wahl, "The French Constitution of 1958: II. The Initial Draft and Its Origins," 367.

[149] Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections Since 1789*, 129. Nor were these the only institutional reforms the Gaulists considered to specifically target the Communists. See Wahl, "The French Constitution of 1958: II. The Initial Draft and Its Origins," 367.

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Gaulle would see implemented over the next decade, all with the purpose of strengthening executive control and breaking the practice of legislative deadlock endemic to French politics.[150] However, these subsequent changes depended on the effective marginalization of the Communist left, something his Second Ballot voting system reform would finally achieve.

In Europe voting system reform eventually gave way to other methods of political control. As the Italian Socialists turned right after 1956 they repudiated electoral cooperation with the Communists and inched closer to the DC, eventually joining a coalition government in 1963. With the Italian Communists now as isolated as the French, the DC found considerable room to move between left and right.[151] In France, de Gaulle's shake up of the political system in 1958 brought about a new constitution and voting system, which had the immediate effect of dramatically under-representing and effectively marginalizing the Communist party. But de Gaulle did not stop there. Over the next decade, now as President, he relentlessly pursued further structural and constitutional reforms to bring the republic closer to his long-term vision of politics, often through questionably democratic means.[152] By the mid-1960s he had largely succeeded in marginalizing the radical right and shifting the political institutions of the state from parliamentary to presidential forms. Though de Gaulle would eventually over-play his populist hand and have to resign after losing one of his 'appeal to the people' referendums, the political stalemate he had inherited had been broken. The Communists were in decline, the French economy and class structure fell more in line with western industrial averages, and no one was talking about electoral or constitutional reform.[153]

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[150] John T.S. Keeler and Martin A. Schain, "Institutions, Political Poker, and Regime Evolution in France," in Kurt von Mettenheim (ed.), *Presidential Institutions and Democratic Politics,* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 91-3. For the election results see Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front,* 270.
[151] Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism,* 228, 235.
[152] Keeler and Schain, "Institutions, Political Poker, and Regime Evolution in France," 90-3.
[153] Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front,* 284-9, 327, 330. For structural changes see Carre *et al, French Economic Growth,* 90-1; Chris Howell, *Regulating Labour: The State and Industrial Relations Reform in*

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The shift to a presidential focus politically in the 1960s also contributed to Communist decline as a PCF candidate for such an office could hardly expect to gain sufficient cross-party support, leaving the Socialists in a better position to mop up left and centre votes.[154]

Germany

German political renewal at the end of the war was more complicated than Italy or France. The four occupying powers - Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States - had different ideas about politics, political institutions and the future of Germany. Divided amongst the four into different 'temporary' zones of influence, German parties and political institutions developed along different lines, depending on their particular occupation authority's preferences. All were concerned to avoid the instability of the Weimar regime, which they blamed on excessive party fragmentation and PR.[155] Of course, German politicians had their own ideas about remaking postwar politics, including the selection of a new voting system, and they were not without influence.[156] The experience of PR under Weimar, including the view that it had helped the Nazis to power, also fueled serious debate about voting systems both within and across the emerging political forces.[157] SPD members who spent the war in Britain returned home with a new appreciation of majority government and first-past-the-post elections.[158] The

Postwar France, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 46; Andrews, *Presidential Government in Gaullist France*, 204-5.

[154] David S. Bell, "The French Communist Party: from revolution to reform," 33.

[155] Daniel E. Rogers, *Politics After Hitler: The Western Allies and the Germany Party System*, (Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1995), 120-1.

[156] However, this should not be overstressed. In more recent accounts German agency is inflated to the point where the influence of occupying powers and the shifting context of US/USSR relations appear to disappear entirely. See Marcus Kreuzer, "Germany: Partisan Engineering of Personalized Proportional Representation," in Colomer (ed.), *Handbook of Electoral System Choice*, 222-36.

[157] Niehuss, "Historiography, Sources and Methods of Electoral and Electoral Law Analysis in Germany - 1871-1987," 156.

[158] Anthony Glees, *Exile Politics During the Second World War: The German Social Democrats in Britain*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 179, 183; Pulzer, "Germany," 93. Glees points out that SPD expatriates

newly-formed Christian Democrats in the CDU also seemed impressed with the potential stability that might come with relative majority or majority voting. But there were deep divisions within both parties about the choice of voting system. Both CDU and SPD members in the Soviet zone insisted on PR, while CDU members in areas of SPD strength in the north also raised objections to majority proposals.[159] Yet the national focus of some of these early debates amounted to little given the lack of any pressing need to make a decision on Germany-wide voting system. As long as the occupying powers continued to negotiate over the future of Germany - including settlement of issues like reparations, economic trade, the withdrawal of occupation forces, and the territorial reunification of the country - no national elections could conceivably be held.

The unresolved issues that stalled political developments at the national level in Germany were less of a barrier to a revival of politics at the local level if only because each occupation force could control the activities within its own zone. And the occupiers each took up their mandate in a slightly different fashion. The Soviets were the first to introduce PR for their zone and the only occupying power to positively embrace it, both to protect the local Communist KPD, which appeared to be in a junior position to the SPD locally, but also to demonstrate a commitment to pluralism to their allies.[160] Over

in Britain had prepared a number of documents concerning postwar constitutional and democratic renewal, including a provision for "one man constituencies with 'special measures' for dealing with small parties." See Glees, *Exile Politics During the Second World War*, 182-3.

[159] Niehuss, "Historiography, Sources and Methods of Electoral and Electoral Law Analysis in Germany - 1871-1987," 157; Pulzer, "Germany," 96. For the reasons for these internal party preferences see below.

[160] Pulzer, "Germany," 93; Peter Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 37-8. Most Cold War era scholarship assumes that the Soviets only introduced PR in their zone to further their manipulation of the political system. For instance, Ebsworth complains that the Soviets introduced party list PR because it would privilege parties and party control, thus facilitating their long-term plan to absorb all of politics into a totalitarian system. However, this tendency to 'read back' from the later events of the Cold War has come under challenge. More recent research suggests that Soviet intentions are not so easily discerned, particularly for the period between 1945 and 1947. Caroline Kennedy-Pipe argues that the Soviets were keen at this time to keep up good relations with the West to further their economic and security goals, and thus faithfully observed western democratic norms. In some ways Soviet motives in introducing PR hardly differed from anywhere else - to help stabilize the local situation by assuring all significant groups were represented (except fascists). But, as Anne Phillips suggests, the Soviets had other reasons to prefer such arrangements; they were much poorer than their US counterparts and needed the local population's help just to administer their territory. Nor do accusations of Sovietization ring true at this point

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the next five years the Soviets would consistently call for PR to be applied to regional and national levels in Germany.[161] In the French zone authorities operated with little input from local Germans, introducing PR for local elections largely because France had just embraced PR. The French addressed the stability question not through electoral engineering but by establishing a firm limit over the number of parties, allowing just four to register.[162] The British introduced relative majority voting for the first local elections in their zone in 1946, reflecting a bias toward their own way of doing things, though a measure of PR was introduced at German insistence via a compensatory list.[163] Only the Americans left the decision about the voting system to the local Germans, choosing to make their influence felt most directly through the licensing of parties and more informal channels. However, the US military command made their preference for PR known. At this time - between 1945 and 1947 - both the American military and the US State department favoured PR for European elections. The military favoured PR to further their goal of governing with local support and creating consensus, thus preventing the occupation from becoming the focus of any emerging opposition politics. The US State

(1945-6) as early efforts by the SPD to merge with the KPD in the east were rebuffed by local Communists and the Soviets who feared a negative US reaction. See Raymond Ebsworth, *Restoring Democracy in Germany: The British Contribution*, (New York: Praeger, 1960), 73; Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War: Soviet Strategies in Europe, 1943-1956*, 5; William David Graf, *The German Left Since 1945*, (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 1976), 25; and Phillips, *Soviet Policy Toward East Germany Reconsidered*, 35-6, 44.

[161] Though the Soviets abandoned PR and competitive elections with the entrenchment of the Cold War from 1948 on, they had consistently supported political pluralism and PR as long as some hope existed for negotiations with their former allies before then. To that end they endorsed PR for local elections in their zone in 1946, as part of the five lander constitutions in the east in 1947, and in various proposals for a reunited Germany between 1947 and 1954. See J.P. Nettle, *The Eastern Zone and Soviet Policy in Germany, 1945-50*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 96; V. M. Molotov, "Provisional Political Organization of Germany," M. Carlyle (ed.), *Documents on International Affairs 1947-1948*, 449.

[162] Rogers, *Politics After Hitler*, 137-8.

[163] Ebsworth, *Restoring Democracy in Germany: The British Contribution*, 53. Though British authorities were tempted to simply impose a single member plurality voting system on their occupied territory, they opted to negotiate with the Germans instead. To their surprise, none of the German representatives to their advisory council expressed a desire to return to the Weimar form of PR, but neither did they accept the British system without reservations either, particularly as concerned its potential to 'waste' votes for parties. From these discussions British officials and the German advisory council eventually "hammer[ed] out a compromise system" combining single member ridings with a compensatory list. For more detail see the chapter in Ebsworth, "Elections and Electoral Systems," 50-77.

Department favoured PR to bolster both the non-Communist left and non-left parties at a time when, in their view, elections were less about government than the creation of constituent assemblies. In Germany particularly, as long as the questions of reparations and reunification remained open, the US also wanted to appear to remain friendly to Soviet interests and open to any number of outcomes. As it happened, the Germans in the US zones decided in favour of PR for local and Land elections, in most cases simply re-establishing the system last used in 1933.[164]

Two years into the occupation national politics in Germany remained in stasis, with local politics under the control of the allies. The Soviets were the first to sanction a return to party politics and arguably allowed the greatest freedom for popular economic policy development, at least initially.[165] But Russian retribution for the German invasion, combined with the inability of Soviet occupiers to match western aid levels, led to a massive migration of Germans into the western zones, effectively undermining stabilization efforts. Not that economic conditions were much better in the British, French and US zones.[166] Yet the US were not prepared to move on economic questions until they could be sure that increased aid would not end up in Soviet hands as German reparations. At the same time American occupiers intervened to forestall grassroots German responses to the crisis, dismantling the local Anitfas committees, installing

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[164] Daniel E. Rogers, "Transforming the German Party System: The United States and the Origins of Political Moderation, 1945-1949," *The Journal of Modern History*, 65:3 (September 1993), 512-4; Pulzer, "Germany," 93-4; Rogers, *Politics After Hitler*, 135-6. Officially US politicians, the State Department and occupation authorities were on record as opposing PR. When two visiting Senators complained that US military leaders in Germany were supporting PR for the proposed West German constitution, both the State Department and military leaders denied it, adding they had always been "skeptical of the democratic merits of PR." Yet from 1945-7 they did nothing to impede its re-introduction into German politics and much to encourage it. Anti-PR German scholar F.A. Hermans, in a special 1970s addendum to his 1941 book, claims that US military forces did influence the eventual restoration of PR in Germany by speeding entry to the county of pro-PR political scientists like James Pollack as advisors, while delaying the return to Germany by those more critical like himself. See Hermans, *Democracy or Anarchy: A Study of Proportional Representation*, 460.
[165] Kolko, *The Politics of War*, 509; Phillips, *Soviet Policy Towards East Germany*, 35.
[166] A.J. Nichols, *The Bonn Republic: West German Democracy 1950-1990*, (New York: Longman, 1997), 53-9.

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conservative politicians as temporary administrators, and preventing elected regional Landers from moving on nationalizations and other popular economic initiatives, even going so far as to use their economic influence over fellow allies Britain and France to limit such efforts in their zones as well.[167] By 1947, with little agreement amongst the allies about reparations, reunification, arrangements for the end of the occupation, etc., the US moved to press ahead with its agenda, eventually bringing Britain, France and west German politicians in line with its plan to establish - at least temporarily - a separate western German state that would be wholly within the orbit of the capitalist west.[168]

The Germans themselves were divided on the wisdom of establishing separate states out of the east-west division of occupation zones, with most accepting it only because it represented a step toward regaining some real sovereignty. As a result, the process of state formation in what would become West Germany was halting, uncertain, and stressed the temporary nature of the arrangements.[169] The Germans were reluctant to call what they were preparing a constitution, lest it appear to forgo some future re-unification of east and west; nor were they prepared to imbue their document with populist sentiment or approval. The American military governors quickly became exasperated with German reticence, though some recognized the contradictions inherent

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[167] Anthony Glees, *Reinventing Germany: German Political Development Since 1945*, (Oxford: Berg, 1996), 42-5; Mark Roseman, "Restoration and Stability: The Creation of a Stable Democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany," in John Garrard, Vera Tolz and Ralph White (eds.), *European Democratization Since 1800*, (Houndsmill: Macmillan Press, 2000), 153-4. A number of authors have underlined the subtle and not-so-subtle ways in which the US occupying powers attempted to influence the re-emergence of politics in Germany, from privileging old-line parties and elites over the grass-roots Antifas organizations, to challenging the left wherever they appeared strong by insisting on the inclusion of more right-wing representatives. See Rebecca Boehling, "U.S. Military Occupation, Grassroots Democracy, and Local German Government," in Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, Axel Frohn, and Hermann-Josef Rupieper (eds.), *American Policy and the Reconstruction of West Germany, 1945-1955*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 281-306; Diethelm Prowe, "Democratization as Conservative Stabilization: The Impact of American Policy," in Diefendorf *et al* (eds.), 325; Edward N. Peterson, *The American Occupation of Germany: Retreat to Victory*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977), 54.
[168] Roseman, "Restoration and Stability: The Creation of a Stable Democracy in the FRG," 151-2; Kuklick, *American Policy and the Division of Germany*, 136-7, 230-1.
[169] Peterson, *The American Occupation of Germany: Retreat to Victory*, 193-5; Roseman, "Restoration and Stability: The Creation of a Stable Democracy in the FRG," 152-4,

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in an occupying power pressing for a constitution animated by the principle that 'all power issues from the people.' Yet American influence would ultimately give shape to some key aspects of the German document, particularly federalism and voting rules.[170] The design of West Germany's political system differed markedly from the Weimar approach in other ways as well. In establishing the new regime there was no constituent assembly, no public input, and no referendum on the results of the deliberations. Instead, delegates appointed by the regional Land governments formed a Parliamentary Council in late 1948 that drafted a Basic Law rather than a full-blown constitution, again underlining the temporary nature of the decisions, and the draft was ultimately subjected to veto and amendment by the Land governments and the occupying powers.[171] The voting system would prove to be a serious point of division amongst the emerging constellation of political forces in the new state, as well as a point of contention with the Allied powers.[172] Dividing Germany altered the strength of different parties, leading to changes of policy on the desirability of different voting systems amongst them and their friends and enemies in the military government.

At the end of the war voting system debate varied within and across parties.[173] There were some in the new Christian Democratic Party, with their Bavarian partners, the Christian Socials, who were interested in the Anglo-American relative majority system. These proponents highlighted how a plurality system would create personal links between politicians and voters, and deliver more stable majority government, but their potential to

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[170] Erich J. Hahn, "U.S. Policy on a West German Constitution, 1947-1949," in Diefendorf *et al* (eds.), *American Policy and the Reconstruction of Germany, 1945-1955*, 21.

[171] Roseman, "Restoration and Stability: The Creation of a Stable Democracy in the FRG," 153-4; Susan E. Scarrow, "Germany: The Mixed-Member System as a Political Compromise," in Shugart and Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?*, 58.

[172] Scarrow, "Germany: The Mixed-Member System as a Political Compromise," 63-6.

[173] Niehaus, "Historiography, Sources and Methods of Electoral and Electoral Law Analysis in Germany - 1871-1987," 157.

dominate such a system also figured prominently in their thinking.[174] There was debate on the initiative, however, with CDU branches in SPD-dominant areas and the Soviet zone remaining strong defenders of a return to PR.[175] But, overall, views were not rigid on the question anywhere. Nearly all parties initially called for a return to PR, just to be on the safe side, with the CDU-controlled American zones making no move away from Germany's traditional form of proportional voting.[176] The SPD had some new converts to relative majority voting, particularly those who had lived out the war in Anglo-American countries, but the party also had strong proponents of its historical attachment to proportional voting.[177] Most of the smaller parties were for PR, though a few of the regionally-concentrated ones dissented in favour of plurality recognizing how it might be of advantage to them.[178] The Americans and the British favoured their own relative majority system but under the pressures of occupation politics the military authorities and the US State Department endorsed PR as a means of creating consensus and shunting criticism away from the Allied powers.[179] Besides, US authorities saw the local and regional Land elections as less about producing government than a kind of weak constituent assembly, thus it was only proper that they should be focused on representativeness as they would be temporary by definition.[180]

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[174] Scarrow, "Germany: The Mixed-Member System as a Political Compromise," 63; Pulzer, "Germany," 95.

[175] Niehaus, "Historiography, Sources and Methods of Electoral and Electoral Law Analysis in Germany - 1871-1987," 157; Pulzer, "Germany," 96. Kreuzer notes that divisions within the parties also influenced deliberations, with southern members of the SPD concerned to weaken the power of its traditionally more dominant northern section. See Kreuzer, "Germany: Partisan Engineering of Personalized Proportional Representation," 227.

[176] Peter H. Merkl, The Origin of the West German Republic, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 86-7.

[177] Pulzer, "Germany," 93, 96.

[178] Scarrow, "Germany: The Mixed-Member System as a Political Compromise," 63.

[179] Scarrow, "Germany: The Mixed-Member System as a Political Compromise," 59-60; Pulzer, "Germany," 93-4.

[180] Pulzer, "Germany," 94.

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However with the move toward creating an independent West Germany, firm opinions about voting systems rapidly crystalized. The SPD shifted decisively back to a defence of PR as the loss of the Soviet zone represented a considerable weakening of their electoral position.[181] Meanwhile, sensing their advantage coming out of the local and Lander elections, CDU opinion hardened in favour of plurality voting.[182] US constitutional advisors came out strongly against PR, supporting the CDU proposal in favour of adopting Anglo-American methods. But American influence appeared to come too late. The decision-making process was influenced by the make-up of the regional Land administrations, nearly all of which had been elected by some form of PR. The Allies' expedient support of proportional voting had led to a Parliamentary Council deadlocked between the equal voting power of the CDU and the SPD, and thus between what were now two opposed visions of the proper voting system.[183] After five months of deliberations, an SPD-led majority in the Parliamentary Council, with crucial votes from the smaller parties, triumphed over the CDU with their compromise proposal for 'personal' PR, a voting system that would combine an even amount of representation from single member ridings and party lists.[184] In the debates, the CDU had made much of the need for a constituency-representative link along the lines of the American and British model to make politicians more responsible and accountable. The SPD model addressed that concern, though the PR aspect undermined the CDU desire for strong, single-party majority government.[185] In the end the proposal reflected many influences - British,

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[181] Niehaus, "Historiography, Sources and Methods of Electoral and Electoral Law Analysis in Germany - 1871-1987," 157.

[182] John Ford Golay, *The Founding of the Federal Republic of Germany*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 139; Scarrow, "Germany: The Mixed-Member System as a Political Compromise," 63; Pulzer, *German Politics 1945-1995*, 50.

[183] Pulzer, "Germany," 94-5.

[184] Golay, *The Founding of the Federal Germany Republic*, 141-2; Scarrow, "Germany: The Mixed-Member System as a Political Compromise," 63-4; Pulzer, "Germany," 97.

[185] There were other, more subtle, influences on the choices as well, with support for single member ridings in the CDU from those favouring greater party decentralization, while SPD elites noted how such

American, German - and the two years of practice with hybrid models at the local and Land level. The parliamentary council then submitted the new electoral law to the military authorities in late February 1949 for approval.[186]

On March 2nd the military government rejected the new voting system, declaring the Parliamentary Council 'not competent' to make such a decision. Instead they insisted that the voting rules must be established by each Lander, though these regional governments could adopt the Parliamentary Council's model if they wished. The decision meant that West Germany could end up using a hodge-podge of voting methods for the same election. The military government's decision was a surprise to everyone. The minister-presidents of the various Lander were already on record calling for a uniform national voting system. Various experts had been consulted and concurred. The Parliamentary Council had publicly struck up a committee to make a decision on the question as far back as September 1948. Yet the rejection of the voting law was "the first official word from the military governors on the subject." John Golay, who provides one of the few detailed accounts of this controversy, suggests that this 'tardy' decision originated in a French and American "penchant for federalist decentralization."[187] One high-ranking US official justified the decision by pointing to American state-level control over the federal election law. But the Germans were unconvinced, countering that the US constitution granted the federal government power to establish a federal electoral system, a power exercised federally in 1842 to force states to abandon multi-member plurality elections in favour of single member plurality. A more compelling explanation of the authorities' decision was that they feared the hybrid PR system would aid the left. By pushing the decision over the voting system to the Lander level, the military governors

arrangements would impair the competitive position of their rivals on the left, the KPD. See Merkl, *The Origin of the West German Republic*, 88; Richard Scammon, "Postwar Elections and Electoral Processes," in Edward H. Litchfield (ed.), *Governing Postwar Germany*, (New York: Kennikat Press, 1953), 507.
[186] Golay, *The Founding of the Federal Germany Republic*, 142.
[187] Golay, *The Founding of the Federal Germany Republic*, 142-3.

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were giving the CDU another chance to secure an Anglo-style first-past-the-post system. If the CDU Lander made the switch, it would put pressure on the SPD governments to do the same or allow their adversaries to reap the rewards of over-representation where they were strong, and maximal representation where they were weak.[188]

The Parliamentary Council protested at this turn of events. With a CDU representative speaking for the group, they argued that the federal lower house could not be chosen by different methods in different regions of the country as it "might result in a completely false representation of the opinions of the electorate." The Minister-Presidents agreed unanimously that a uniform voting system was needed and called on the military government to approve the hybrid-PR model. The occupation authorities relented but insisted on a number of minor changes to the original proposal. The Parliamentary Council complied, resubmitting the voting law May 10. On May 23 they met for the last time to essentially bring the Basic Law into effect. But the debate over the voting system did not end there. Though the military governors had confirmed the Parliamentary Council's right to establish the voting rules just two weeks before, they now invited the Minister-Presidents to propose further changes if they were not happy with the existing model. In fact, they suggested that if a 'substantial majority' of the Lander did not favour the current system they would consider changing it. As five of the eleven Landers were controlled by the CDU a 'substantial majority' for the Parliamentary Council model might not exist. Indeed, this time the Minister-Presidents did offer amendments, calling for a shift from a 50/50 breakdown between single member ridings and party list seats to a 60/40 split, as well as the introduction of a threshold that would limit small parties. They did not try to replace the Parliamentary Council's work entirely, for instance by insisting on a uniform single member plurality system, but the suggestions

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[188] Golay, *The Founding of the Federal Germany Republic*, 143.

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did reduce the overall proportionality of the system and disadvantage non-regional smaller parties.[189]

The parties that had formed the majority in the Parliamentary Council, the authors of the original hybrid system, objected when they heard about the proposed changes, arguing that the Minister-Presidents had no right to interfere with their decisions. The SPD leader complained that the western allies were "breaking with the Bonn Constitution within a few days of approving it" while accusing the CDU of conspiring with the occupiers for their own gain. The SPD declared they might boycott the elections if the changes went through. Meanwhile, the SPD/FDP Minister-Presidents who had gone along with the others in proposing amendments to the Parliamentary Council's voting system were inundated with negative responses from their party organizations about their actions. At the next Minister-Presidents' meeting June 10, the SPD/FDP leaders moved the re-open the question of their involvement in the process, resulting in a letter to the military government from the Lander heads questioning their right to intervene in such matters. They underlined that the beginning of constitutional life must not be marred by "shadows of doubt," and as such disavowed the power granted to them by the occupation authorities. But the military governors were not deterred by these protests and simply ordered the proposed changes to be implemented.[190] Besides watering down the Parliamentary Council's model voting system, the CDU won other victories in the battle over West German electoral law. They managed to have the new voting system, the 1949 electoral law, enacted only on a temporary basis - for the life of the first parliament.[191] Thus they would possibly have the opportunity to revisit the debate after the elections, depending on the balance of the outcome. American influence had been a key factor in

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[189] Golay, *The Founding of the Federal Germany Republic*, 144-5.
[190] Golay, *The Founding of the Federal Germany Republic*, 145-6.
[191] Eckhard Jesse, "Electoral Reform in West Germany: Historical, Political and Judicial Aspects," in Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms: Origins of Voting Systems in Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 375.

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the decision to leave the voting system itself outside of the constitution-like Basic Law, thus facilitating its reform in the future by a simple majority vote.[192]

Not surprisingly, voting system reform remained a topic of debate in West Germany throughout the 1950s as the right-wing CDU sought to entrench their position as the dominant party. The controversial division of the occupied Germany territory in 1949 put the new West Germany on the front lines of the Cold War and tipped its domestic politics to the right. As these political conditions began to change, the CDU attempted to secure a majoritarian voting system that would reward them with clear control of the legislative arena. However, the immediate postwar practice of proportionality in sub-national elections had led to a fairly even split between left and right in terms of representation, allowing the SPD and centre parties to block this move and introduce a new hybrid PR system, at least on a temporary basis. The question of voting system reform remained a priority for the CDU and they argued for a change to some form of majority voting throughout the 1950s.

When the temporary voting law adopted in 1949 elapsed before the 1953 federal election the CDU cabinet introduced a proposal for a two-vote system, with one to be cast in a single member district and other for a supplementary list. The system would essentially reward parties that could make alliances, like the CDU and its partners, and punish those that could not, like the SPD. Commentators drew comparisons with the Italian bonus law of the same year while much of the public perceived it as a 'law' to preserve the current governing coalition. Poor responses from other parties and the public moved the CDU to back down and simply re-pass the mixed-PR system (with some minor tweaking), again for just one election. Throughout 1955 and 1956 the CDU floated a plan that would keep the mixed system but sever the relationship between the

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[192] Pulzer, "Germany," 94-5.

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single member ridings and the compensatory list, with the effect of greatly reducing the proportional outcome. But this plan also failed when their centrist allies split on the issue. Once again the CDU re-passed the hybrid-PR system in 1957, this time deleting the one-election expiry clause.[193] By the end of the decade the CDU would even appeal to the SPD to support a shift to majority voting as a way of pushing the smaller parties out of political competition, an argument some on the left found attractive. But the CDU's dominant position in the political system throughout the 1950s ultimately moved their competitors, both large and small, to oppose reform. Ironically, the party did not lack the votes to secure a new voting system, having won an outright majority of seats in the elections of 1953 and 1957. But their need to gain super-majorities to pass the western integration treaties meant they did not force through voting system reform for fear of alienating their centrist allies.[194] After the treaties were passed the CDU shifted their appeals for reform from the centre to the left, a dialogue that continued well into the 1960s.

By the 1960s, Germany was only European country where the voting system remained at issue, driven primarily by the now long-governing CDU. For some time Germany's political right were becoming increasingly frustrated with the demands of their long-time centrist partners, the FDP. With the western integration treaties duly passed, and the German SPD fresh from a significant round of revisionism that moved the party closer to the centre, the CDU proposed an historic 'grand coalition' of the two major parties take government and, among other things, pass a new voting law that would weaken or eliminate the smaller parties. The SPD refused the offer in 1962 but in the face of yet another defeat at the polls finally agreed to the deal in 1966. A legislative

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[193] Eckhard Jesse, "The Electoral System: More Continuity than Change," in Ludger Helms (ed.), *Institutions and Institutional Change in the Federal Republic of Germany*, (New York: St.Martin's Press, 2000), 128-9.
[194] Pulzer, "Germany," 98.

committee of the two parties was struck to consider how to replace the mixed-plurality/PR system with some form of plurality voting, pure and simple. After considerable research by the committee and independent studies by both parties, and amid fairly high levels of public interest and debate over the "best electoral system," the SPD backed off their commitment to voting system reform, opting to form a coalition themselves with the estranged FDP. The SPD feared they might end up a permanent loser in an single member plurality system and their opposition to change helped link the centre parties to the left rather than the right. The CDU were incensed but isolated. Attempts to woo back the FDP failed while appeals for public support fell flat. The public could see little reason for reform and polls consistently registered high levels of support for PR. By the early 1970s the CDU reluctantly dropped the issue after a quarter century of effort.[195]

Anglo-American countries

As in Europe, public opinion in Anglo-American countries at the end of the war supported a renewed and more substantive form of democracy, and tended to view the Soviet Union in generally positive terms. In Britain, Labour's victory over popular wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his Conservative party clearly signaled the shift to the left, a trend that was consistent throughout the British Commonwealth. In the US, public demands for an extension of the Rooseveltian New Deal to areas of social policy mirrored larger western trends.[196] At the same time US policy-makers were

[195] Eckhart Jesse, "The West German Electoral System: The Case for Reform, 1949-87," *West European Politics*, 10:3 (July 1987), 435-6; Jesse, "The Electoral System: More Continuity than Change," 129; Jesse, "Electoral Reform in West Germany: Historical, Political and Judicial Aspects," 375-6; Pulzer, "Germany," 98-102.

[196] For a discussion of some of the contradictory pressures of the American postwar 'New Deal,' see David L. Stebene, "The Postwar 'New Deal'," *International Labor and Working Class History*, 50 (Fall 1996), 140-7.

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concerned about the risk of an economic slump, though they were deeply divided about how to respond. Meanwhile public views about the Soviet Union in Anglo-American countries were highly positive, with most believing that a new and productive relationship could be formed between east and west. [197] In 1945-6 it certainly was not clear that the world was heading for a bipolarization centring around the threat or promise of 'communism.' But as the level of political support for domestic communists was either low or non-existent in Anglo-American elections, public attitudes were more susceptible to influence than in Europe where strong Communist parties existed. Throughout 1946 Soviet responses to American initiatives in Europe were increasingly characterized as 'intransigent' in English-language media. Thus primed, audiences had little distance to go when the Cold War was finally launched in 1947. [198]

Yet the Cold War was not merely propaganda, it also served domestic political purposes across Anglo-American countries, helping to marginalize the liberal and labour left and contain the publicly-popular social democratic initiative they championed. In the US, the Cold War helped settle questions of the American role in international political economy and regulation, leading to a powerful realignment of the political system. Whether Cold War anti-leftism would be marshaled to justify institutional change like voting system reform in Anglo-American countries would depend on the competitive position of left parties, the nature of political divisions within any given country, and the strategic position of the country vis-à-vis the emerging superpower standoff. In most cases, it was not required, but in a few episodes it proved useful to both the right and the left.

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[197] Lunderstad cites an August 1945 poll where 54% of Americans agreed that the Soviet Union could be trusted to cooperate with Soviet Union, while Churchill's March 1946 speech claiming an 'iron curtain' had fallen across Europe garnered substantial negative reaction in the US. See Geir Lundestad, *America, Scandinavia and the Cold War, 1945-1949*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 19-20.
[198] Lundestad, *America, Scandinavia and the Cold War, 1945-1949*, 20.

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As noted above, the US sponsorship of the Cold War was a strategic decision designed to break through the stalled negotiations over an acceptable postwar international economic and trading system, one that shifted the trajectory of American thinking about economic matters. Though much work on the immediate postwar era tends to assume that an interventionist political economy was largely accepted by western policy-makers by virtue of war experience with economic planning and the still resonant memories of the Depression, not to mention the obvious need to rebuild a war-torn Europe, this was not the case, particularly in the United States. Economic orthodoxy - balanced budgets, limited public expenditures, etc. - remained influential despite the emerging challenge from the centre-left for a more interventionist political economy.[199] The United States, the only great power with any surplus of resources in 1945, attempted on more than one occasion to cut or limit loans to European countries shortly after the war ended.[200] The commitment to a kind of international Keynesianism through the Marshall Plan, then, was a political decision informed less by historical memory or the functionality of wartime production than the material difficulties US policy-makers were facing in setting the parameters of a new international economic system. Ongoing economic difficulties in Europe were only strengthening the left, not weakening it. In the absence of any clear agreement from the Allied powers, political struggles across Europe

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[199] American experts and politicians were divided about how to respond to the economic crisis in Europe, with New Deal liberals favouring Keynesian-style intervention, while conservatives called for cutbacks in spending. For a general discussion of this debate, see Thomas W. Zeier, "Managing Protectionism: American Trade Policy in the Early Cold War," *Diplomatic History*, 22:3 (Summer 1998), 337-60; John Gillingham, "From Morgethau Plan to the Shuman Plan: America and the Organization of Europe," in Diefendorf *et al* (eds.), *American Policy and the Reconstruction of West Germany, 1945-1955*, 111; and Harper, *America and the Reconstruction of Italy, 1945-1948*, 4. For specific examples of American indecision, see Harper, 19; and Miller, *The United States and Italy, 1940-1950*, 179.

[200] Kolko, *The Politics of War*, 397-8, 400-1, 500-1. Many scholars have highlighted the role of unfavourable US public opinion about increased spending in Europe as a factor limiting the initial American responses to the economic and political problems after the war. However, Truman's Cold War and anti-communism campaigns effectively gave shape to a new winning domestic political coalition that encompassed a wide swathe of the centre-left to the far right. See Miller, *The United States and Italy, 1940-1950*, 224-5; Miller, "Taking Off the Gloves: The United States and the Italian Elections of 1948," 42-3, 53; and Romero, *The United States and the European Trade Union Movement, 1944-1951*, 100-101.

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were delivering piecemeal reforms in just the direction America opposed - economic planning and regulation, nationalization of industry, promises of social services and entitlements, etc. US leaders, fearing the policy drift was moving in a direction favourable to the Soviet Union, finally countered with a program of anti-communism to marginalize the left electorally and the Marshall Plan to undermine support for their economic ideas. Basically, US planners were convinced that if the economy improved support for the left would decline.[201] Though scholars debate whether the Marshall Plan really played a pivotal role in the economic recovery of Europe, with some arguing that recovering was on the way regardless of its contributions, its real importance was in convincing European political elites to hitch their fortunes to American leadership, thus granting US policy-makers extraordinary influence in European politics. This was one reason the anti-fascist coalition could not be pieced together after its breakup in 1947, despite considerable efforts on the part of Communist parties.[202]

Thus committed to their anti-Communist strategy, the United States moved quickly to shore up their supporters in Europe to decisively marginalize both the domestic and international influence of Communist parties and the Soviet Union. In both covert and overt ways, American money found its way into the 1948 contest in Italy in support

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[201] Beyond undercutting left political appeals in the short term, Kuklick suggests that many US thinkers of the period also believed that the economics shaped both politics and individual psychology over the long term as well, and that the establishment of an American-style economic regime would inevitably lead to American-style thinking and political competition. As Truman put it in his famous Doctrine, "The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive." See Kuklick, *American Policy and the Division of Germany*, 4; and for the full text of the Truman Doctrine, see Margaret Carlyle (ed.), *Documents on International Affairs 1947-1948*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 2-7. On US reactions to political developments in Europe at this time see also Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War*, 108; Eley, "Back to the Beginning: European Labor, U.S. Influence, and the Start of the Cold War," 96-8; Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 300-02; and Michael Wala, "Selling the Marshall Plan at Home: The Committee for the Marshall Plan to Aid the European Economy," *Diplomatic History*, 10:3 (Summer 1986), 747-65; Romero, "Interdependence and Integration inAmerican Eyes: From the Marshall Plan to Currency Convertibility," 155-7.

[202] For American motives see Eley, "Back to the Beginning: European Labor, U.S. Influence, and the Start of the Cold War," 101-2; Eley, *Forging Democracy*, 304; Sassoon, *100 Years of Socialism*, 173. For a view that doubts the economic impact of the Marshall Plan, see Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe*.

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of the DC, with US diplomats making clear statements to Italian voters about what the negative and immediate repercussions of a left victory would be. American money flowed to anyone willing to challenge the Communists, including Socialist and labour organizations willing to break with left unity.[203] Positive results from these efforts eventually led US elites to urge voting system reforms on their European allies, specifically a move away from PR to more majoritarian voting systems that would permanently marginalize the left.

The first example of a connection between an explicit anti-communism and voting system reform actually occurred in the United States itself. New York City had adopted PR as part of a new city charter in 1936, the end result of a long process of municipal reform aimed at breaking the power of the Democratic 'machine' that had long controlled the city. Initially most newspapers and reform forces supported the change, though the Democrats remained hostile and tried to use the courts (unsuccessfully) to quash it.[204] Over the next decade, the new PR system contributed to greater competition in council races, better representation of smaller parties, and an increase in debate and attendance at city hall. Yet PR in NYC did not automatically lead to minority rule or coalitions. After nearly losing their majority status in the first election under the reformed rules in 1937, the Democratic Party re-asserted their control over council from then on despite PR, winning majorities in 1939, 1941, 1943 and 1945. On the whole then, the PR experiment had been deemed a success by most people, even supporters of the machine parties.[205] Still, Democrats and Republicans continued to challenge the system, attempting to have

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[203] Harper, *America and the Reconstruction of Italy, 1945-1947*, 156; Sassoon, *100 Years of Socialism*, 109; Miller, "Taking Off the Gloves: The United States and the Italian Elections of 1948," 48; Filippelli, *American Labor and Postwar Italy, 1943-1953*, 40, 64, 96, 112.

[204] George H. McCaffrey, "Proportional Representation in New York City," *American Political Science Review*, 33 (October 1939), 843-4, 845-6.

[205] Belle Zeller and Hugh A. Bone, "The Repeal of P.R. in New York City - Ten Years in Retrospect," *American Political Science Review*, 42 (December 1948), 1137; Joshua B. Freeman, *Working Class New York*, (New York: The New Press, 2000), 56-7.

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the state legislature ban PR for local use in 1938 and 1944, and repeal the system through an initiative referendum at the city level in 1940. For the two main parties, and an increasing number of formerly pro-reform newspapers like the *New York Times*, PR had let loose a degree of political competition that made controlling the political agenda much more difficult. But all these efforts to return to more 'normal' voting could not escape their association with the very forces that reform had initially been aimed at - machine politics. The self-interest was so blatant that it contributed to their defeat.[206]

When the US shift against the Soviet Union was launched in the spring of 1947 the discourse of anti-communism would prove an attractive ideological weapon in the hands of sub-national political elites at home. The machine politicians in New York City quickly latched onto anti-communism as the means of getting rid of the PR system they hated so much, sponsoring a repeal initiative in the fall of 1947. The leader of the Democratic Party's infamous Tammany Hall urged voters to "throw out this Stalin Frankenstein" and claimed that PR was a "foreign political theory that has created confusion with the blessing of the Kremlin..."[207] The parties' arguments hinged on the fact that PR had allowed Communists to be elected to the council. A leading Republican argued that PR had resulted in "disproportionate representation for a well-disciplined, organized group whose main purpose is to alter the form of our government." The gist of the party broadsides was that PR would allow the Communists to wield considerable political influence and power. But the facts were somewhat different. The Communists had actually been under-represented in all three of the contests where they gained election. And their support had already been slipping, from a high of 14% in 1943, to just 9% in 1945.[208] In truth, the Communists on council were no threat to anyone, though

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[206] Zeller and Bone, "The Repeal of P.R. in New York City," 1127, 1131.
[207] Zeller and Bone, "The Repeal of P.R. in New York City," 1128.
[208] Zeller and Bone, "The Repeal of P.R. in New York City," 1128, 1132.

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the PR system clearly was. PR forced the political machines to expend a lot of resources to keep their supporters in line, and devote greater energies to governing and responding to critics. Neither of the major parties or their media supporters were fond of this.

The repeal of PR in New York City in 1947 reaffirms the key role of political parties in voting system stability or change.[209] The PR system in NYC had been introduced in the teeth of opposition from both the Democrats and Republicans, the most powerful party organizations in the country. The parties supporting it were local or regional at best and thus much weaker organizationally. After the reformist Fusion slate disappeared in the 1943 election PR support was primarily concentrated on the left, a distinct minority even in America's largest city. Still, PR had a broad base of support, as the coalition for retaining the system - a group consisting of most of the leading citizens not connected with the machines - clearly demonstrated. But they could not muster the staggering resources of their opponents, and the leftward tilt of their party support left them open to attacks of bias.[210] Meanwhile the anti-PR initiative could hardly claim to be more balanced as it was almost entirely organized and funded by the two big parties, particularly the Democratic machine, with support from an emerging Cold War alliance that included veterans and the American Federation of Labour.[211] The signature-gathering campaign to get the repeal question on the ballot was managed through the 'clubhouses' of the two big parties and accusations of petition fraud were made by the pro-PR forces during the process but were never investigated. The anti-PR side then swamped the

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[209] Sticking with US examples, Weaver underlines this point in comparing the typically short life span of PR use at the municipal level with the "high survival rate" of cumulative and limited voting system reforms in the United States. His explanation for the difference focuses on the role of parties, with latter reforms representing a bargain between political parties rather than an imposition by more temporary and less organized reform forces over their heads. See Leon Weaver, "The Rise, Decline, and Resurrection of Proportional Representation in Local Governments in the United States," in B. Grofman and A. Lijphart (eds.), *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences*, (New York: Agathon Press, 1986), 144.

[210] Zeller and Bone, "The Repeal of P.R. in New York City," 1130, 1146.

[211] Though organized labour would remain divided on the question, with local support for PR in a host of locales that used it, even while national AFL conventions condemned it. See Ralph Straetz, *PR Politics in Cincinnati*, (New York: New York University Press, 1958), 26-7; Freeman, *Working Class New York*, 75.

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electorate with literature and broadcasts, outspending their rivals nearly ten to one. Anti-PR newspapers had a clear advantage in circulation over the opposition: nearly five to one on weekdays and over ten to one on Sundays. With so little visible support for keeping the system, nearly every borough supported repeal.[212] The model established in NYC would become the template for further repeals of municipal PR elsewhere in the US (if not focusing on communism, then taking up the theme of un-American voting and a defense of the two-party system).[213]

Beyond Europe the American-inspired Cold War influenced left-right political competition even where Communists had marginal support or influence. In Australia the Labour party had governed throughout the 1940s, implementing a modest set of welfare state policies that enjoyed public support. The party came to power midterm in 1941, and then won re-election in 1943 and 1946, in the last case securing control of the Senate as well. Labour's postwar victory, much like those of their counterparts in Britain and Europe, gave voice to a strong public desire for changes in the Australia's social and political order. Liberal leader and former PM Robert Menzies was devastated with the loss, fearing what Labour could do with such a clear mandate.[214] But the Cold War offered Labour's opponents a chance to break their hold on government. As superpower tensions rose in 1947, Labour attempted to chart an independent course on relations with the Soviet Union, rejecting American-led efforts to brand their former ally as an enemy. But as western countries increasingly fell in line behind the American position, including Britain's first majority Labour party government, Australian Labour found themselves

[212] Zeller and Bone, "The Repeal of P.R. in New York City," 1131, 1138, 1144-6.
[213] Barber, A Right to Representation, 58; Weaver, "The Rise, Decline, and Resurrection of Proportional Representation in Local Governments in the United States," 143; Straetz, PR Politics in Cincinnati, 13-4, 201-8.
[214] A.W. Martin, Robert Menzies, A Life: Volume 2, 1944-1978, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1999), 57.

isolated both at home and abroad.[215] The opposition, having now publicly committed themselves to some of the government's more popular social policy agenda, successfully played up Australia's vulnerability to Chinese or Soviet attack, while accusing Labour of not taking the threat seriously.[216] Thus the Cold War became an opportunity for right-wing parties in Anglo-American countries to blur the line between socialism and communism, tarring mainstream labour-oriented parties with accusations of subversion and links to the Soviet Union.

The accusations leveled against the Australian Labour government - that they were soft on communism, crypto-commmunist, or laying the policy groundwork for a Soviet-style system - lacked credibility. Labour had a long history of poor relations with the Australian Communist party and members of the government had nothing positive to say about the Soviet regime or their ideas about socialism.[217] Labour's own 'socialism' was a eclectic mix of British Fabianism, economic nationalism, American populism, and a pro-Commonwealth approach to trade. Labour's plans for the postwar period were arguably more nationalist than socialist - build up Australia's industrial capacity, nationalize control over investment and key resources, enhance and extend government services and maintain full employment.[218] Labour's refusal to go along with the emerging

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[215] Though it should be noted there was some dissent on this pro-American position in Britain's Labour government. See Wayne Knight, "Labourite Britain: America's 'Sure Friend'? The Anglo-Soviet Treaty Issue, 1947," Diplomatic History, 7:4 (Fall 1983), 268-9; and Jonathan Schneer, Labour's Conscience: The Labour Left 1945-51, (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), particularly chapter 3, "The Labour Left and the Third Force Movement," 52-78.

[216] David Lowe, Menzies and the 'Great World Struggle': Australia's Cold War 1948-1954, (Sydney: UNSW Press Book, 1999), 15, 19; Geoffrey Bolton, The Oxford History of Australia, Volume 5, 1942-1988, The Middle Way, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990), 68; Dennis Phillips, Cold War 2 and Australia, (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 19. Barclay suggests that anti-communism took hold more deeply in Australia than other comparable British commonwealth countries because security concerns had long been a more pressing issue in the remote colony. See Glen St. John Barclay, "Australia and the Cold War," in Joseph M. Siracusa and Glen St. John Barclay (eds.), The Impact of the Cold War, (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1977), 3.

[217] Neville Meaney, "Australia, the Great Powers, and the Coming of the Cold War," Australian Journal of Politics and History, 38:3 (1992), 330; Phillips, Cold War 2 and Australia, 34, 37; Colin Bell, Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), 40.

[218] Phillip Bell and Roger Bell, Implicated: The United States in Australia, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993), 114-5.

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Cold War had less to do with the Soviets than the government's concerns about the emerging worldwide reach of the United States. Wartime relations between the US and Australia convinced Labour leaders that Americans were hardly the good-natured, generous 'innocents abroad' featured in Hollywood newsreels. Lend-lease negotiations between the two countries had been tough, ultimately forcing Labour to back off a number of key economic policies. Meanwhile US representatives made it clear that American postwar plans involved a reconstructed economic system worldwide, one where free, unfettered access to the Australian market would be key to continued trade. While Labour had traditionally held many positive views about the United States, government leaders were furious with the wartime American administration, accusing them of practicing a kind of 'dollar imperialism' at the expense of smaller countries.[219] As with the 'bridge-building' approach of the Scandinavian social democrats, Australian Labour envisioned themselves, along with the British Labour government and the Commonwealth, acting as a kind of 'third force' that could intervene between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.[220]

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[219] Bell and Bell, *Implicated: The United States in Australia*, 94-6. Of course, Australian motives were not disinterested either. For instance, many scholars have commented on the colonial aspects of Australian foreign policy, noting that even Labour was keen to maintain hegemony in their region. Some, like Rick Kuhn, attribute this to a slavishly pro-American bias on the part of Australian parties, but this is clearly not the case for Labour, at least in the period around WWII. Others, like Joseph M. Siracusa and Gun St. John Barclay, point to friction between the US and the Australian government precisely because Labour expected to be consulted about any geo-political maneuvers taking place within their region. Labour was also frustrated with the American prosecution of the war, particularly as it affected Australia, and US indifference to signing a defence treaty with Australia and New Zealand. But authors that note the military angle tend to ignore the economic issues at stake, explaining Labour's responses to the US Cold War as resulting from a heightened sense of "liberal internationalism" and preference for the UN (see Meaney), or their own territorial ambitions (Siracusa and St. John). Yet Colin Bell points out that Labour's notions of economic sovereignty could fit well with either, as was clear in the 1944 ANZAC treaty between Australia and New Zealand which endorsed mutual security, regional sovereignty and Keynesian economic policies and nationalization. See Rick Kuhn, "The Pattern of the Australian Labor Party's Foreign Policy Since 1900," *Left History*, 3.2/4.1 (Fall 1995/Spring 1996), 85-132; Joseph M. Siracusa and Glen St. John Barclay, "Australia, The United States and the Cold War, 1945-51: From V-J Day to Anzus," *Diplomatic History*, 5:1 (Winter 1981), 41-5; Meaney, "Australia, the Great Powers, and the Coming of the Cold War," 316-7, 320-1; and Colin Bell, *Dependent Ally: A Study in Australian Foreign Policy*, 35.

[220] Meaney, "Australia, the Great Powers and the Coming of the Cold War," 318, 326; Bell and Bell, *Implicated: The United States in Australia*, 96.

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As a kind of Cold War hysteria gripped Australia in 1948, and the government reeled from a serious of political setbacks at the polls, on the picket lines, and in the courts, Labour turned its attention to the voting system used for Senate elections.[221] From 1918 on Senate elections had occurred in state-wide multi-member ridings with majority voting, a set up which nearly always had the effect of delivering all the seats to one party, usually the one leading in the lower house elections. However, because only a portion of Senators were elected in each contest, a government sweep might not result in control of the upper house, especially if the winning party had spent little time in government recently.[222] This was particularly true for Labour, which faced hostile majorities in the Senate through most of its brief spells in power. In fact, Labour had only gained control of both houses in an election for the first time in 1946.[223] Yet in 1948 Labour proposed changing the Senate's method of election from a majority to proportional system. That Labour would now consider some reform to a body it had only just managed to secure control of raised questions about its motives. One later commentator described Labour's move as "wise and self-abnegating," while another suggested that the government

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[221] It should be underlined that anti-communism of itself did not drive Labour from office. By 1949 the government had made a series of political miscalculations that left them open to attack, including a series of high profile (and ultimately losing) battles with the high court over its economic policies, the continuation of unpopular wartime rationing for a number of consumer items, particularly gasoline, and a disastrous response to postwar labour militancy that played into the hands of the opposition. As for communism specifically, Labour had arguably tilled the ground that would become a vicious anti-leftism in the 1948-9 period by sanctioning a purge of Communists and their sympathizers from its own ranks and that of organized labour in the mid-1940s. Labour's draconian treatment of Communist and suspected Communist labour leaders during the 1948-9 strikes appeared desperate and self-serving, ultimately serving to reinforce the criticisms of the right and their media supporters while demoralizing and dividing Labour's constituency on the centre-left. See Phillips, *Cold War 2 and Australia*, 37; and Martin, *Robert Menzies, A Life*, 62-3..

[222] J.F.H. Wright, *Mirror of the Nation's Mind: Australia's Electoral Experiments*, (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1980), 113-4.

[223] Because of retirements, deaths, etc., Labour actually gained control of both houses at midterm 1944, but then confirmed this control electorally in 1946. See Anthony Fusaro, "The Australian Senate as a House of Review: Another Look," *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, XII:3 (December 1966), 389; and Geoffrey Bolton, *The Oxford History of Australia, Volume 5, 1942-1988, The Middle Way*, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990), 40-1.

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leadership was primarily interested in better representation.[224] But given a fairly clear pattern of local and state election defeats from late 1947 on, many suspected that Labour's reform drive was designed to leave the party in control of the Senate even if they lost control of the lower house.[225] Labour wedged the reform into a series of trade-offs around an expansion of the House. All parties supported increasing the number of MPs, a move that constitutionally triggered an increase in the number of Senators as well. Given Labour's commanding lead in Senate seats, and the fact that only part of the Senate was up for re-election at any given time, a switch to PR would probably allow Labour to maintain legislative influence through the Senate, even if their government fell.[226] Some Labour members counseled against the change, noting it could create problems for a Labour government in the future, but the leadership pressed ahead.[227] The combined might of the opposition's anti-Communist attack, fueled by relentless hostility to Labour in the press and from the courts, pushed Labour into survival mode, seeking to secure

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[224] Russel Ward, *A Nation for a Continent: The History of Australia 1901-1975,* (Richmond: Heinemann, 1977), 278; Bolton, *The Oxford History of Australia,* 73.

[225] John Uhr characterizes the conventional wisdom about Labour's intentions this way, suggesting that both academic and popular commentators generally accept that the reform was designed to maintain Labour's influence in the Senate and avoid the rout that the multi-member AV system in use from 1919 to 1948 would have undoubtedly produced. As Australian Senate elections were staggered, with only some seats up for election in each cycle, the introduction of PR would allow Labour to win some of the new Senate seats in the coming election thus adding to their existing advantage. But Uhr argues that this rational calculation model ignores the long advocacy of PR for the Senate from all political quarters. Instead he suggests that the 1948 adoption was merely the "final stage in a frequently deferred plan of parliamentary reform that goes back to Federation." Basically, Uhr is arguing that most political operatives, the government included, had come to a new view of how the upper house should be constituted and operate, one that had long history in the country. While Uhr is correct that PR had many advocates over the years - from the Federation and post-Federation debates, to the upheaval during and after WWI, to the Depression-fueled discussions of Senate reform, to the 1940s debates over expanding the size of the two houses - these precedents do not adequately explain Labour's decision in 1948, especially given Labour's continuing opposition to an upper house in principle. See John Uhr, "The Senate and Proportional Representation: public policy justifications of minority representation," Australian National University Public Policy Program Discussion paper No. 69, September 1999.

[226] Fusaro, "The Australian Senate as a House of Review," 390.

[227] Bolton, *The Oxford History of Australia,* 73.

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whatever guarantees for themselves that they could. PR in the Senate would assure the party a base to work from, at least until the Cold War hysteria died down.[228]

Despite Australia's experience, voting system reform as a strategy to limit or save the left did not re-emerge in Anglo-American countries after WWII with the same frequency or force as after the previous war. The social consensus for a kind of welfare state and full employment was simply too strong to be denied completely by electoral engineering. In Britain, the 1945 election manifestos of Labour and the Conservatives were hardly distinguishable. Voters seemed to make their decision based less on policy differences than their belief in which of the parties would actually carry them out.[229] In the wake of their first clear victory in 1945, British Labour had little interest in voting system reform. The traditional plurality system had given Labour a solid majority of seats with which to govern, and the party's strong Cold War stance meant they suffered little fallout from the anti-Communist hysteria later. Nor did the Conservative opposition wish to raise the issue and potentially limit their return to power. When voting system reform was raised in the all-party Speaker's Conference in 1948 it was quickly voted down.[230]

Elsewhere in English-speaking countries voting system reform barely registered. The failure of Henry Wallace's third party bid in the US removed any pressure for institutional reform in the American political system, while the rising anti-communism of the era would effectively hinder subsequent efforts to establish parties independent of the

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[228] The reform had its intended effect when first used in 1949; Labour lost the election but held on to a majority in the Senate. However, the strength of anti-communism did not abate, eventually dividing the Labour party and costing them their Senate majority just a few years later. Though the right gained control of both houses in this period (something no government has done since) they did not repeal PR voting for the Senate, despite their strong opposition to its introduction. The fact the Labour's coalition had splintered and a new party had successfully competed for a portion of Labour's former vote base in the Senate might have influenced the government's decision to keep STV. See Phillips, *Cold War 2 and Australia*, 31-6; and Sawer, "Australia: Replacing Plurality Rule with Majority-Preferential Voting," 483.

[229] Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 141.

[230] David Butler, *The Electoral System in Britain 1918-1951*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 125; Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 262-5.

Republicans and Democrats. In fact, efforts toward progressive politics only served to hasten the end of PR experiments where they existed at the city council level.[231]

The surfeit of political competition at the federal level in Canada following World War II raised some temporary interest in voting system reform, with both backbench Tories and Liberals suggesting the adoption of some form of majoritarian transferable balloting (i.e. AV). However, the front benches of the two main parties were not alarmed, especially when voting support for the left CCF began to decline in the late 1940s and 1950s. The federal Liberals proved adept at co-opting just enough of the CCF's social agenda to keep their coalition of working class voters and business supporters together. The surprising election of the CCF in the rural farming province of Saskatchewan in 1944 had given traditional party elites a nasty fright, but the party failed to reproduce this effort in the more populous provinces. The party did make gains elsewhere in the west, though the use of PR for urban ridings in both Alberta and Manitoba effectively blunted the impact of their arrival.[232]

The exception was British Columbia. The dramatic rise of the BC CCF in the 1930s from nothing to opposition status in a few short years flummoxed the province's traditional party system, eventually forcing the Liberal and Conservative parties to form a coalition government in 1941. The BC party was certainly to the left of the CCF elsewhere, fortified by urban populists and resource-area union militants. The electoral threat that the CCF might 'go up the middle' in a vote split between the coalition members kept the alliance together through the 1945 and 1949 elections.[233] Though the government won both elections handily, the coalition was fraught with tensions. Forcing

[231] See Barber, *A Right to Representation*, 59, 103. The most striking example of progressive politics fueling repeal is Cincinnati in 1956 when a black councilor appeared set to gain the mayoralty. See Robert Burnham, "Reform, Politics and Race in Cincinnati: Proportional Representation and the City Charter Committee, 1924-1959," *Journal of Urban History*, 23:2 (January 1997), 152.

[232] Pilon, "PR in Canada: An Historical Sketch," 31-3.

[233] Martin Robin, *Pillars of Profit: The Company Province 1934-1972*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 56-7.

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the two parties to govern together interfered with the electoral incentives typically used to fuel partisan loyalty and party work. Cabinet-building was a complicated process of negotiations between the two parties and, as such, tended to change little between elections. This effectively denied the party leaders a key resource in controlling their caucuses - the ability to promote and demote members. The two coalition party caucuses also disliked each other, with Liberals feeling superior to their numerically smaller allies, while the Tories resented being frozen into a junior position on the basis of the 1941 election. Federal branches of the two parties were also unhappy with how coalition was gumming up patronage decisions and information-sharing between the two levels at elections.[234] After the 1945 election rank-and-file members in both coalition parties increasingly started forwarding resolutions to their conventions calling for a some kind of voting reform that would allow the parties to compete but at the same time prevent the CCF from 'going up the middle.' The majoritarian transferable ballot (otherwise known as AV in Britain and Australia), used for rural ridings in Alberta and Manitoba, was seen by many party activists as the best way out of the problem. But the party leaderships, reticent to broach the subject lest if threaten the coalition arrangement, effectively blocked consideration of the reform before the 1949 election.[235]

The 1949 victory proved the high point for the coalition government experiment. Now into their third term of office, the coalition's policies were starting to show wear as the government came under increasing media and public criticism. Backbenchers in both parties began to get nervous as the only viable alternative to the present government appeared to be the Socialist CCF. For their part, the CCF had shed some of their more fiery rhetoric, and the 'good government' practiced by the Saskatchewan party since 1944

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[234] Donald Alper, "The Effects of Coalition Government on Party Structure: The Case of the Conservative Party in B.C.," *BC Studies*, 88 (Winter 1990-1), 40-9.

[235] Dennis Pilon, "Making Voting Reform Count: Evaluating Historical Voting Reform Strategies in British Columbia," Making Votes Count Conference, May 13, 2000, Vancouver, B.C., 10.

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challenged the more extreme media and coalition government speculations of the chaos that might follow a CCF victory. As the caucuses of both coalition parties pressured their leaders to fashion some way to dissolve their union, the question of voting system reform returned to the spotlight. When the Conservatives quit the government in 1951 they forced the Liberal Premier's hand and he introduced the transferable ballot for use in the next election. The thinking behind the move was straightforward. The transferable ballot would allow the former coalition partners to compete freely against each other, but each party's voters could give their second choice to their former ally, thus preventing the CCF from benefiting from any vote-splits that might occur. Still, the strategy was risky. When the two parties had formed a coalition they essentially cut voters out of the deliberation, forcing them to accept or reject what they had done by giving them a choice between themselves and the Socialists. This was the approach preferred by party elites. But as the coalition strategy was no longer tenable for a host of reasons, the transferable ballot seemed an acceptable alternative. Besides, the traditional rallying cry of anti-socialism would resonate more deeply in the early 1950s amid the anti-communism of the Cold War, or so Liberal and Tory strategists believed. Certainly the former coalition partners justified the voting reform on the basis that socialism was too dangerous to allow to come to power in the normal (i.e. plurality) way.[236]

By 1960 voting system reform in Anglo-American democracies had clearly run its course. In most cases, the conditions and reform forces that had fueled what little reform had occurred had dissipated. The few American cities still using PR had repealed them by the end of the 1950s in favour of single or multi-member plurality voting.[237] Experiments with hybrid PR/majority systems in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and

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[236] Pilon, "Making Voting Reform Count: Evaluating Historical Voting Reform Strategies in British Columbia," 10-11.
[237] Weaver, "The Rise, Decline, and Resurrection of PR in Local Governments in the United States," 142-5.

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Manitoba also ended with a return to plurality in the mid-fifties, while the lingering municipal uses of PR in Calgary and Winnipeg were undermined by structural reforms in the 1960s.[238] In all these cases the return to the status quo plurality voting system was moved by political parties who could see little benefit in retaining proportional or majority voting. The prairie farmer politicians who had sponsored majority voting to protect themselves from status quo parties were no more. The insurrectionary left associated with the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike that had inspired the adoption of PR then bore little resemblance to the mild reformism of the 1950s electoral left embodied in the CCF. Besides, the prairie left was weak in the 1950s, governing only in poor and depopulated Saskatchewan while lagging as the third party most everywhere else.[239] Only in British Columbia did the CCF appear electorally competitive and ideologically threatening enough to bring about a postwar voting system reform, though the breakdown in the political coalition between provincial Liberals and Conservatives was probably the key motivating factor. The shift from plurality to majority voting, designed to prevent the CCF from 'going up the middle' between the now competing former coalition partners, did not work out exactly as planned. Liberal and Tory elites and their financial backers wanted to break up their coalition but not allow the CCF to benefit by doing so. But in the election following the reform a new reformist, right-of-centre party emerged, aided in part by the new voting system, and captured significant support and a minority government. In another election just a year later the new Social Credit party won a

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[238] In Calgary, the multimember ridings were reduced to dual member ridings, and then the two members were elected to over-lapping terms, effectively converting an STV PR system into a majoritarian AV system. In Winnipeg, the workings of the STV system were diminished by the introduction of regional governing structures that confused lines of political accountability and led to a wholly new structure in 1972 that did away with PR altogether.

[239] Pilon, "Proportional Representation in Canada: An Historical Sketch," 34-5; Pilon, "The History of Voting System Reform in Canada," 117; Bob Hesketh, "The Abolition of Preferential Voting in Alberta," *Prairie Forum*, 12:1 (Spring 1987), 123-44; Jansen, "The Single Transferable Ballot in Alberta and Manitoba," and Johnston and Koene, "Learning History's Lessons Anew: The Use of STV in Canadian Municipal Elections," 205-47.

legislative majority as former coalition voters came to recognize them as the most competitive anti-left party in the running. Now with clear control of the legislature and the centre-right of the political spectrum the Socreds repealed majority voting in favour of plurality.[240]

Voting system reform proved useful in a few Anglo-American locales both to limit and protect the electoral left, with anti-Communist hysteria a key factor in both instances. Anti-communism was the wedge used by the Republican and Democratic parties in New York City to secure their long-sought-after repeal of PR and an end to multi-party competition at the civic level. In Australia a virulent anti-Communist witch-hunt extended to the rather mainstream Labour party, forcing it to seek shelter in voting system reforms that would protect some institutional space for the party in a proportional Senate. And finally in Canada a degree of anti-communism helped justify the opportunistic adoption of majority voting at the provincial level in British Columbia to keep the socialist CCF from capturing power. But in most places, changing the voting rules was not required to quell the leftist threat. As in Europe, most Anglo-American elites recognized that a degree of social reform could no longer be avoided, and with a skillful co-optation of a good deal of the left's social programme, they managed to retain power for themselves without conceding a great deal.

Conclusion

For most democratic countries coming out of WWII voting system reform did not emerge as a key issue. But this should not be interpreted to mean that voting systems were not considered important. For countries already using PR, like most of the smaller

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[240] Pilon, "Making Voting Reform Count: Evaluating Historical Voting Reform Strategies in British Columbia," 10-12.

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democracies in Europe, the strength of the postwar left assured that other political forces had little interest in agitating for any change - PR remained the best method of limiting the left's electoral power. In Anglo-American countries PR had never really been necessary to contain the threat of democracy or the left. Either the left was too weak (Canada, New Zealand) or traditional elites were more confident (Britain, Australia) that they could manage the 'leap in the dark' toward some form of limited democratic government. But simply counting the number of countries taking up voting system reforms after WWII does not capture the scope and intensity of the debate on the question. At the war's end, the choice of voting rules in Europe's three largest countries – Italy, France and Germany - became intensely political questions, ones that involved both national and international dimensions. Within each country an unstable but potentially governing majority of the centre-left gave voice to broad and sweeping public demands for both social and economic change. Set against this were the disorganized and discredited forces of the right, desperate to limit this expansive democratic agenda. Nearly all forces initially approved of PR to either manage their unwieldy coalition (the centre-left) or to place some limits on their adversaries (the right).

But beyond these national disputes was an emerging international struggle for dominance driven by American designs for a new world economic order. American influence would also be important in decisions over voting rules. As the key occupying power in postwar Europe, the US made its initial preference for PR clear as a means of limiting the left and holding national disputes in check while it negotiated with the Soviet Union. American influence would ultimately help tip the political scales in Europe back to the centre-right, and in doing so alter the debate over voting systems. As the Cold War took hold across Europe, and a centre-right coalition replaced the centre-left in government across the continent, the postwar consensus for PR gave way to a new

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majoritarian strategy designed to marginalize the large, powerful, and electorally popular Communist parties. Both the American state and American academe provided support for efforts to dislodge proportional voting in favour of a US-style first-past-the-post system.

Yet US influence, both financial and intellectual, could not assure the success of any desired changes. Instead, the struggle over voting system reforms in Italy, France and Germany played out against distinctive backdrops involving the nature of political party resources and competition, nationally-specific cleavage structures, and the unpredictable effects of previous political decisions. In the end, contingent factors in each country contributed to the success or failure of each reform, though the drive for reform was the same everywhere – to assure democracy remained safe for capitalism and free from left interference. The decisions were political and political actors sometimes misjudged circumstances or their opponents. By the 1960s the political threat of the left and its agenda had diminished to the point where voting system reforms appeared no longer necessary to contain them. In the absence of such a challenge, the political coalition required to effect change – an unwieldy and unstable group even when threatened - could not be secured.

De Gaulle's voting system reform of 1958 proved the last to be successful for some time. Though discussion of voting systems continued into 1960s in Germany and Ireland, and emerged as a political issue in the Netherlands, the political conditions were not conducive to successful reform. Political elites might have wanted reform desperately but they could not convince their allies or the public that the need was either pressing or in the public interest. By the 1960s the political landscape had changed. The driving force behind postwar voting system reforms had been the strategic position of the left. In the immediate postwar period the hegemony of the centre-left in Europe had

made PR a consensus position across the political spectrum, just as the marginalization of Communist parties motivated attempts to repeal PR later. Anything less than this level of Cold War threat made attempts at voting system reform appear partisan and immediately suspect. Where a majority government could simply change the rules (BC, Alberta), or where all major parties agreed to the change (Manitoba), they were often successful in doing so. But where they had to seek public (Ireland) or coalition party support (Germany, Netherlands), the initiatives failed. For the better part of three decades after 1960, voting system reform was off the political agenda in western democracies.

Chapter Seven: Voting System Reform in the Modern Era

Introduction

The 1990s witnessed an explosion of interest in electoral systems, multi-partism and political institutions generally. This was hardly surprising given the epoch-shifting events that marked the opening of the decade: the fall of the Communist bloc in 1989-90, the reunification of Germany in 1990-91, the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994, and the return to democratic rule in a host of Latin American countries. After all, new democracies would need to establish some means of electing their new representative chambers. But the focus on democratic institutions held the spotlight throughout the 1990s due to an even more surprising development: the successful reform of long entrenched electoral systems in established democracies. Italy and New Zealand adopted new voting systems in 1993, Japan followed suit in 1994, and Britain introduced a myriad of new systems for local, regional and European elections in 1997.[1] To many - academics, political commentators, politicians - these latter developments were inexplicable. Calls for voting system reform had long been dismissed as simply grumbles from the politically marginalized, not something to be taken seriously. However, when the issue seemed to firmly take root in the 1990s, overcoming entrenched party and political elite opposition in a host of countries, commentators were at a loss to explain its sudden viability.

Since then, a number of tenuous efforts at explanation have emerged, most focusing on the general trend toward de-alignment in western party systems, the breakdown of traditional cleavages, the changing values of modern citizenry, and the

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[1] By the 1970s Japan was increasingly being considered another 'western' industrialized democracy. This was not the case in the immediate postwar period as the country had no democratic experience and operated under American tutelage well into the 1950s. As such, Japan's voting system reforms in 1990s are included here while previous reforms in the 1920s and 1940s were not considered in relevant previous chapters.

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achievement of a new institutional equilibrium or "modernization." Thus the recent institutional fluidity within modern democracies is claimed to represent the influence of a changing electorate, one less focused on material, Cold War era electoral competition, in favour of post-material issues and less party-directed political participation. Commentators suggest that in New Zealand, Italy and Japan public frustration with politics led to a break with politics-as-usual and traditional parties loyalties, and that this eventually fueled a shift from party competition as the key political focus to institutional reform. Or analysts focus on how various contingent factors (corruption, policy reversals, etc.) acted on longstanding structural problems (lack of alternation in government) to fuel reform in favour of a new institutional equilibrium, particularly with reference to Italy and Japan. In Britain, voting system change has also been credited to a delayed process of institutional and political modernization.[2] Less attention has been paid to larger changes in international political economy, specifically struggles to alter the international regulation of capitalism, the pressures affecting the electoral strategies of parties, debates within the electoral left, and the continuing saliency of traditional cleavages. Yet these latter factors largely comprise the context against which these recent reforms have played out and as such need to be reckoned with in any explanation of change.

The most recent period of voting system reform represents both departures and continuities with past reform efforts. The contemporary left, both as a party and extra-parliamentary force, is no longer a threat worthy of voting system reform, though struggles within the left, combined with the left's poor performance in elections and

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[2] For a sample of such approaches see Norris, "Introduction: The Politics of Electoral Reform," 3-8; Shugart, " 'Extreme' Electoral Systems and the Appeal of the Mixed-Member Alternative," 25-54; Scott Flanagan and Aie-Rei Lee, "Value Change and Democratic Reform in Japan and Korea," *Comparative Political Studies*, 33:6 (June 2000), 626-59; and Patrick Dunleavy and Helen Margetts, "From Majoritarian to Pluralist Democracy? Electoral Reform in Britain Since 1997," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 13:3 (2001), 295-319.

government, have fueled left interest in institutional reforms. Thus, in a departure from the efforts that followed both world wars in the twentieth century, changes in voting systems today are not being sought to limit the left electorally. There is now little need to marginalize the left's traditional populist-democratic 'imaginary' and the perceived threat to capitalist power and decision-making that it historically represented because left parties have largely done the job themselves. But recent voting system reforms are still being sought to accomplish specific political and economic goals as a kind of 'politics by other means,' particularly where the balance of power in different political systems has proven difficult to shift. Thus contemporary struggles over voting systems, as with similar battles following World War I and World War II, are related to important struggles over national and international political economy, struggles given force by the now unchallenged world influence of the United States and powerful groups both within and outside other modern states. And here the role of left parties, the structure of nation-based party systems, and the continuing - if weakened - influence of traditional cleavage structures have been important factors. In France, New Zealand, Italy and the United Kingdom, struggles over party systems, the strategic positioning of the left, and decisions about neo-liberal economic restructuring have been important catalysts to voting system reform, though in other countries similar battles have not produced the same institutional changes. In this chapter we'll examine these recent reforms and the factors outlined above to explain why this is so.

The end of the 'golden age' and the re-emergence of voting system reform

A conventional sketch of economic and political developments since the end of World War Two would typically highlight the dynamic growth of western economies, the rise in living standards for all classes of people, and the eventual decline of ideological politics and political commitments more generally. By the 1960s an influential body of opinion trumpeted the 'end of ideology' suggesting that the traditional working class were now more interested in consumption than any dynamic process of social and political change.[3] By the 1970s and 1980s political scientists claimed to discover a marked change in traditional voting patterns across western countries and a more general de-alignment of voters from their usual choice of political parties. This was credited to a number of developments: a shift in voter attitudes from material to post-material concerns, voter displeasure with the now traditional Keynesian methods of economic management, and a more general decline in economic conditions, particularly as the 1970s gave way to the 1980s.[4] At the same time the nature of public involvement in the political process also changed over this period as membership and active engagement in political parties declined and voter turnout started to drop. The decline of mass parties could be traced back to the 1950s as the rise of public services, television and urban sprawl gradually replaced the old interface between parties and the public. By the 1970s the public link with politics had been further weakened by the rise of professional party organization, centralized media-oriented campaign strategies, and increasingly tight links between state funding and political parties.[5]

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[3] See Seymour Martin Lipset, *Political Man: The Sociological Bases of Politics*, (1960; New York: Anchor Books, 1963), 50, 269-70, and particularly chapter 13, "The End of Ideology," 439-56.

[4] See various contributors to R.J. Dalton, S.C. Flanagan, and P.A. Beck (eds.), *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies: Realignment or Dealignment?*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[5] See P. Mair, "Party Organizations: From Civil Society to the State," in R. Katz and P. Mair (eds.), *How Parties Organize: Change and Adaptation in Party Organizations in Western Democracies*, (London: Sage, 1994), 4.

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Meanwhile, questions of voting system reform had largely fallen off the radar by the 1960s. In past reform eras, the strength of the left was a good barometer of the salience of voting system reform as an elite issue. This was due to the perception by opponents of the left that state power would prove a formidable instrument in the hands of a left government to alter economic relationships and inequalities. But after World War II, as left governments came to power in most western industrialized countries at one time or another, it became clear that they had little intention or ability to use state power to fundamentally alter the economic system or conventional property rights.[6] Yet, at the same time, the centre-right were forced to accept the extension of welfare state measures and various Keynesian methods of economic regulation after WWII under great public pressure, strong competition for office from the left, and international influences stemming from the Cold War. In this way, a kind of centrist social policy equilibrium was achieved and in most cases voting system reform died off as a centre-right reform objective. This politics of the 'golden age' witnessed unprecedented levels of economic growth and rising living standards across western industrial countries. The mixed economy had replaced the stark choice between socialism and capitalism, apparently solving the riddle of unpredictable capitalist crises that had destabilized modern societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while the welfare/interventionist state offered enough advantages to both labour and capital to quell their desire for more thorough-going change.[7] With such a political compromise in place, neither left nor right exhibited much interest in institutional reforms or voting systems.

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[6] Moschonas, *In the Name of Social Democracy*, 21, 63.

[7] While it was common practice in the 1950s and 1960s for politicians and pundits to refer to western economies as 'mixed' rather than capitalist, just what the mixture represented, or what capitalism had been mixed with, was far from clear. To mistake nationalizations and the extension of government social programs for 'socialism' ignored how left governments were ultimately forced to make their still capitalist economies work within conventional parameters of profit and competition. Thus many characterize the postwar settlement as a clearly capitalist model. For a view that highlights the role of American hegemony in this process, see Robert O. Keohane, "The World Political Economy and the Crisis of Embedded

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This centrist consensus started to fracture amid the breakdown of the postwar economic model in the 1970s and 1980s. Initially neither left nor right could figure out how to respond to rising inflation, lower productivity and profitability, and unemployment, and governments of all stripes lurched from wage and price controls, to renewed commitments to Keynesian strategies, to early experiments with neo-liberal policies. While left parties appeared somewhat confused throughout this period, largely unsure whether to push their state project forward or scale it back, the right eventually went on the offensive, calling for reduced government commitments to the welfare state and a less regulated approach to world trade.[8] Eventually, over a period spanning two decades, a new policy convergence emerged where commentators from the left to the right appeared to agree that the state was essentially powerless in the face of the globalizing pressures created by free trade, new information technologies, free-floating global finance and investment, etc. In this view, contemporary governments had little choice but to economize, cut programs, and establish competitive business environments.[9] Most analysts of recent voting system reforms have accepted these developments uncritically, using them to explain voter dissatisfaction with government and party performance, and by extension the de-alignment of the party system, and the shift of both left and right party policies toward neo-liberal approaches.[10]

Liberalism," in J. Goldthorpe (ed.), Order and Conflict in Contemporary Capitalism, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 18-22. For a more general discussion of the mixed economy, see Meghnad Desai, Marx's Revenge: The Resurrection of Capitalism and the Death of Statist Socialism, (London: Verso, 2002), particularly chapter 14, "The Golden Age of National Capital," 216-34.

[8] The crisis was real - wage pressure backed by strong labour movements combined with more competitive international markets weakened capitalist profitability, effectively forcing the Keynesian compromise into crisis. Despite efforts at corporatist compromise (i.e. wage and price controls) the status quo could not be maintained - some new arrangement was required. See Desai, Marx's Revenge, particularly chapter 16, "Things Fall Apart," 250-69.

[9] John D. Stephens, Evelyne Huber and Leonard Ray, "The Welfare State in Hard Times," in H. Kitschelt, P. Lange, G. Marks and J. Stephens (eds.), Continuity and Change in Contemporary Capitalism, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 164-6, 178-9.

[10] See Shugart, " 'Extreme' Electoral Systems and the Appeal of Mixed-Member Alternative," 45; and Dunleavy and Margetts, "From Majoritarian to Pluralist Democracy: Electoral Reform in Britain Since

But the recent and decisive rightward drift of the policy consensus across the political spectrum is open to different interpretations. Not everyone agrees that states are losing power to global forces. Another view suggests states are just as powerful as ever, though they are using that power differently than before. In this view, the last quarter century has witnessed a pitched battle by the most powerful economic forces to reshape the state, to cut back government-sponsored social entitlements, and introduce forms of economic regulation that heighten the risks faced by the many while protecting the substantial investments of the few. This has been accomplished not by 'escaping' the state, but by remaking it - changing laws, setting up barriers to certain kinds of activity and taking down others, and, sometimes, reforming institutional arrangements to facilitate this process.[11] Though the neo-liberal reform of states has elicited high levels of negative public opinion and organized resistance from progressive forces and most left political parties, the institutional left has largely failed to animate any clear alternatives to these 'reforms.' Nor have they proven capable of coordinating a sustained or effective public defence of the still-popular postwar social democratic legacy. In fact, in a number of western industrialized countries, left parties have been deeply complicit in the process of dismantling these accomplishments and introducing nascent neo-liberal policies.[12] But it would be wrong to characterize the behaviour of left parties as a simply a pragmatic accommodation to economic 'realities.' For a time the left in Sweden, France and Britain

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1997," 315; for just two examples of how the recent changes in political economy are handled unproblematically. For a brief review of the cultural modernization theory that undergirds such views, see Norris, *Electoral Engineering*, 10-11.

[11] Leo Panitch, "Globalization and the State," *Between Globalism and Nationalism: Socialist Register 1994*, (London: Merlin Press, 1994), 65. For an overview of how states themselves authored this process, see Helleiner, *States and the Re-emergence of Global Finance: From Bretton Woods to the 1990s*.

[12] Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 516-7; Stephens *et al*, "The Welfare State in Hard Times," 185-9. The British Labour government's acceptance of IMF loan terms in the late 1970s is seen by many as an early embrace of neo-liberalism but debate over this decision and the party's economic direction would continue within the party throughout the 1980s. By contrast, the West German SPD did embrace neo-liberalism in the 1970s as part of the price of governing with the highly 'free market' FDP. See the British debate, see Clarke, "Capitalist Crisis and the Rise of Monetarism," 393-527.

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toyed with pursuing a more radical economic agenda that would intrude heavily on the rights of capital.[13] Thus we must explain their decisions to abandon or not pursue these alternatives rather than assume that economic conditions made their decisions automatic, necessary or inevitable.

The recent policy convergence of political parties of all stripes toward the right is curious when we recognize that many of the historical issues and conditions that previously fueled left parties remain relevant. Western countries are still primarily populated by people reliant on wages to get by, despite their 'contradictory' class positions or debates about the appropriate classification of white collar versus service industry workers. In fact, given present levels of indebtedness, even those with high wages would find themselves in difficult circumstances without a job, even for a short period. Surveys may reflect the existence of widespread 'post-material' values but economic statistics portray a very material reality of stagnant wages, declining living standards, and increasing economic insecurity.[14] In other words, a constituency traditionally linked to the left appears to still exist, and seems to require just the sort of economic representation the left has historically provided.[15] Yet the left either cannot or will not capitalize on it.

What appears to have changed is either the political will or the ability to organize these concerns into a politicized cleavage. Most commentators explain the recent decisions of left parties to further downplay class issues in terms of the declining salience of class as a cleavage, the failure of left policies, or as a bid to gain new supporters. But these approaches are hardly convincing. Cleavage explanations tend to underestimate

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[13] Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour*, (London: Verso, 1997), 3-9.

[14] John Myles and Adnam Turegun, "Comparative Studies of Class Structure," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 20 (1994), 119.

[15] For a view that disputes the class dealignment thesis, see Jeff Manza, Michael Hout and Clem Brooks, "Class Voting in Capitalist Democracies Since World War II: Dealignment, Realignment, or Trendless Fluctuation?" *Annual Review of Sociology*, 21 (1995), 137-62.

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both how salient the class cleavage remains in western countries and the multiple ways it has influenced left politics.[16] Class cleavages strongly correlate with left parties but how they affect them is mediated by the country-specific nature of left coalitions and the influence of historical events and opportunities. Continental left parties contained a shifting mix of radical and reformist socialists, while Anglo-American labour parties combined socialist and non-socialist forces – both coalitions changed shape over time in reaction to both historic failures and openings. After World War II, the electoral left everywhere made the most of the postwar consensus to push for high levels of social welfare, with some believing the new 'mixed' capitalist economy was a transition step toward socialism. Ironically, it has been the very success of left social policies, rather than their failure, that has actually contributed to a weakening of left parties. Many analysts have noted that the decline of a mobilized left electorate is partly due to way left policies in government have lessened their supporters' dependency on the party for social benefits, or by the way in which certain policy decisions (like the state-aided creation of urban and suburban housing) have broken up the traditionally tightly-knit geographic space of left voting support.[17] Thus a more compelling approach to explaining the shifting strategies of left parties, and why they fail to address the class cleavage, would focus on organizational factors like the nature of the interface between left parties and their electorates, combined with attention to changes in campaigning, campaign finance, and the media.[18]

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[16] Gosta Esping-Andersen, "Politics Without Class? Postindustrial Cleavages in Europe and America," in Kitschelt et al (eds.), Continuity and Change in Contemporary Capitalism, 311-12; Moschonas, In the Name of Social Democracy, 102-4.

[17] See Eric S. Einhorn and John Logue, "Continuity and Change in the Scandinavian Party Systems," in S.B. Wolinetz (ed.), Party and Party Systems in Liberal Democracies, (New York: Routledge, 1988), 170-6; Alan Ware, Citizens, Parties and the State, A Reappraisal, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 228; and George Ross and Jane Jensen, "Post-War Class Struggle and the Crisis of Left Politics," Socialist Register 1985-86, (London: Merlin Press, 1986), 30.

[18] For an nuanced take on the organizational changes affecting left parties, see Moschonas, In the Name of Social Democracy, specifically chapter 8, "Inside Social Democracy: Organization in Mutation,"120-53.

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For the past three decades election campaigning has been moving away from the direct face to face mobilization of supporters that was pioneered by the left and contributed to the rise of mass politics. In the new, almost wholly mediated political environment, left parties face difficulties of access and representation.[19] Given that modern democracy is largely a televised spectacle, left parties must get on TV to get to the public as much as anyone. Yet television is expensive to access and tilted decisively against the left in its representation of politics and society. Meanwhile the decline of the mass party has denied the left its own communication and mobilization networks. Increasingly cut off from their supporters, and confronted by an aggressive, US-led attempt to remake the international economy, left parties have taken their cue from elite sources like media or through problematic methods of public consultation like polling.[20] Meanwhile, left voters have also found it difficult to anchor left parties in a distinctive policy profile, often witnessing a party campaign in one way but govern in another. Given their current organizational weaknesses in mobilizing a counter-hegemonic project, left parties have sought less to change society than to simply change themselves,

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Tsoukalas takes up these developments in a more general way, suggesting how changes in the structure of national and international capital within countries has altered their interface with national politics, driving up the cost of elections and limiting the effect of more local counter-mobilizations. See Constantine Tsoukalas, "Globalization and the Executive Committee: The Contemporary Capitalist State," in L. Panitch and C. Leys (eds.), Global Capitalism Versus Democracy: Socialist Register 1999, (London: Merlin Press, 1999), 56-75.

[19] While not discussing the left specifically, Swanson and Mancini highlight how the increasing dominance of media in political campaigns everywhere leads to "a style of political reporting that prefers personalities to ideas, simplicity to complexity, confrontation to compromise, and heavy emphasis on the 'horse race' in electoral campaigns." They claim that deregulation of media in Europe and elsewhere is contributing to an 'Americanization' of politics globally, characterized by increasing personalization or candidate-centered campaigns, a rise in campaign costs associated with advertizing and professional election administration (i.e. polling, agency-created ads/campaign themes), and a remaking of campaigning to fit media structures and priorities. On the face of it, none of these developments appears to benefit the left. See particularly their introduction and conclusion in D.L. Swanson and P. Mancini (eds.), Politics, Media and Modern Democracy: An International Study of Innovations in Electoral Campaigning and Their Political Consequences, (Wesport: Praeger, 1996), as well as 11-14 and 251.

[20] The problematic nature of polling is taken up in Benjamin Ginsberg, The Captive Public: How Mass Opinion Promotes State Power, (New York: Basic Books, 1986); and Charles T. Salmon and Theodore L. Glasser, "The Politics of Polling and the Limits of Consent," in T. Glasser and C. Salmon (eds.), Public Opinion and the Communication of Consent, (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 437-58.

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sundering their historic links to organized labour and traditional social and economic policy commitments.[21] Ironically, in eschewing their traditional public-oriented state approach left parties have often been left with little distinctive or concrete to offer their voters, contributing to either a loss of support or the alienation of many from the political system.[22] As parties everywhere increasingly replicate the American model of simply pursuing the middle class electorate, voter turnout in most countries has dropped.[23]

This changing relationship between left parties and their electorate, and left parties and the state, and the sidelining of traditional class issues from contemporary politics that has accompanied it, has figured in all of the most recent voting system reforms, though this process has by no means led to voting system reform as a general response across western countries. The salience of the issue has been related to the logic of political party competition existing within different countries, a factor related to the nature and structure of particular party systems. In countries like Canada, Australia, Britain and the United States the remaking of political economy has been settled without recourse to institutional reform because the existing parties were prepared to facilitate the process, and existing cleavage structures or institutional barriers were such that little effective resistance could be mounted. Labour in Australia, the Liberals in Canada, the Thatcher Conservatives in Britain (followed by Blair's Labour), and the Democrats in the US have all managed to eschew traditional commitments to the 'mixed economy' and

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[21] On the changing relations between unions and left parties, see James Piazza, "De-Linking Labor: Labor Unions and Social Democratic Parties under Globalization," *Party Politics*, 7:4 (2001), 413-35. However, this process of 'de-linking' has been overstated in some cases, like Sweden; see Nicholas Aylott, "After the Divorce: Social Democrats and Trade Unions in Sweden," *Party Politics*, 9:3 (2003), 369-90.

[22] Moschonas, *In the Name of Social Democracy*, 114-5; Esping-Andersen, "Politics Without Class," 311-14.

[23] For debate over the causes of the recent decline in voter turnout, see Mark N. Franklin, Michael Marsh and Patrick Lyons, "The Generational Basis of Turnout Decline in Established Democracies," *Acta Politica*, 39 (2004); Mark N. Franklin, *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies Since 1945*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Mark Gray and Miki Caul, "Declining Voter Turnout in Advanced Industrial Democracies, 1950 to 1997," *Comparative Political Studies*, 33:9 (November 2000), 11-22; and Martin P. Wattenberg, "Turnout Decline in the U.S. and Other Advanced Industrial Democracies," UC Irvine Center for the Study of Democracy Research Paper, 1998.

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pursue aggressive neo-liberal policies while suffering little by way of sanction from their voters. In countries like Sweden, however, the strength of the left as a political cleavage has prevented left parties from shifting too far to the right. And even in those countries where voting system reform has emerged in response to neo-liberal pressures, it has been taken up in different ways. In some cases voting system reform became the catalyst for resisting neo-liberal reforms (New Zealand), while in others it was a strategy to win them and entrench them (France, Japan, Italy). In other words, the current reform efforts are intertwined with struggles over the politicization or de-politicization of cleavages, reconfiguring the state's role in regulating economic activity, the internationalization of investment and media, and the strategies taken up by political parties. These struggles take place within and across existing institutions, even when it is institutions themselves that are being contested. Thus to understand what is going on in each country, we need to examine questions of cleavage, state economic regulation, institutional development, and political party activity.

Against this backdrop of economic crisis, party decline and renewal, and struggles over the remaking of national and international political economy in the 1970s, interest in voting system reform re-emerged in a number of countries. In some cases consideration was driven by necessity. Newly democratizing countries like Spain and Portugal obviously had to adopt some form of voting as they cast off decades of authoritarian rule. Under such conditions, the left appeared to have both a moral and electoral advantage, though it was unclear how much. Given the uncertainty, both left and right were keen for PR, much as similar conditions had produced the same consensus further north after both World Wars.[24] But a number of established democracies also focused some attention on

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[24] See Jordi Capo Giol, "To Reform the Electoral System in Spain?" in Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms*, 408-9; and on the upheaval surrounding democratization, see Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, 599-623.

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voting systems. Some, like Japan and the Netherlands, simply amplified and expanded discussions that had lingered on from the 1960s, while others, like Italy and Canada, returned to the question after a break of many decades. Yet these discussions in the 1970s did not produce a single voting system reform in any of the established democracies. Though each country faced acute political problems in that decade – intractable governing stasis in the Netherlands, corruption and one-party dominance in Japan and Italy, regional and cultural polarization in Canada – these proved insufficient to motivate any change in the voting rules affecting political party competition.

Though little came of these discussions at that time, the return to debate over democratic institutions amid economic and political uncertainty challenged assumptions about the stability of modern democratic structures. France's temporary adoption of PR in the 1980s, largely dismissed by observers as simply another example of that country's peculiar enthusiasm for voting system reform, was actually a signal of the kind of institutional struggles that would shortly come to dominate discussion of political reform in established democracies in the 1990s, as well as the conditions that would contribute to it. Specifically, voting system reform emerged in France (at least temporarily) out of left struggles to come to grips with the new national and international conditions of capitalism, their own organizational weaknesses, and to remake their political coalitions and the party system more generally. An intensification of these conditions in the 1990s would contribute - in different ways in different places - to the rise of voting system reform in New Zealand, Italy, Japan and the UK.

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Ireland, the Netherlands and Canada

The voting system came under scrutiny in a few other locales in the 1960s and 1970s but the forces driving the process failed in their efforts to change them. Ireland had used the STV form of PR from its inception, later entrenching it in a new constitution passed in 1937. Though it was initially introduced by the British to weaken the influence of republican agitators, and later to protect the Protestant minority in the south, it had served mostly to balance the bitter sectarian divisions of the republicans themselves and represent a small Labour party. Though he championed the system during the 1937 constitutional revisions, Eamon de Valera, the leader of the subsequently dominant Fianna Fail party, decided that British-style voting and the governing majorities it tended to produce might have a lot to recommend it. But the party's campaign to repeal the system in 1959 and again in 1968 appeared self-serving and partisan. After all, no other party or public body supported the change, and no public demand could be said to be motivating it. In the end a majority of voters defeated the repeal effort in both cases.[25]

Voting system reform also became an issue in the Netherlands in the 1960s, given prominence by the breakthrough of a new party into the political system. The Democrats 66 offered a populist and reform-oriented set of proposals to shake up the Dutch political system and break the stasis that characterized policy development and political competition. They called for an elected head of state and a move away from the proportional voting that they blamed for the lack of legislative change from election to election. Though they gained a considerable following for a time, they failed to convince other parties or enough voters to embrace their approach. By the mid-1970s their electoral support had declined and the debate over voting system reform tapered off.[26]

[25] Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Europe*, 210-12; McKee, "The Republic of Ireland," 167, 183; Lakeman, *Power to Elect*, 89-90.

[26] Arend Lijphart, "The Dutch Electoral System in Comparative Perspective: Extreme Proportional Representation, Multipartism, and the Failure of Electoral Reform," *The Netherlands Journal of Sociology*, 14 (1978), 128-31; Rudy B. Andeweg, "Institutional Reform in Dutch Politics: Elected Prime Ministers,

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Canada can be seen as a striking example of how crisis – even one directly connected to representative institutions - does not automatically contribute to voting system change. For a time in the 1970s some change of voting system was touted in Canada, at least amongst elite opinion-makers. Scholars had long noted the regional biases in Canada's traditional first-past-the-post voting system, that it benefited parties with regionally concentrated support while punishing those without, but the major parties appeared to have little incentive to change it.[27] The 1976 Quebec provincial election victory for the separatist Parti Quebecois broke through the complacency about institutional reform. Now a better reflection of the polity, both its regional differences and its shared national aspirations, seemed imperative to stave off a nasty break-up of the country. In one response, Prime Minister Trudeau established the Pepin-Robarts Task Force on Canadian Unity to sound out a way forward. Reporting in 1979, the commissioners recommended a host of institutional reforms, including a slight element of proportionality for elections to the House of Commons.[28]

Over the next few years, Canadians produced report after report in favour of mildly proportional reforms, exhibiting a hitherto little-known passion for electoral engineering.[29] The key concern was to eliminate the sometimes wild distortions that appeared between what were real patterns of regional voting and the artificially-inflated regional results that parties achieved in first-past-the-post elections. Yet, with hindsight,

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Personalized PR, and Popular Veto in Comparative Perspective," *Acta Politica*, 32:3 (Autumn 1997), 235, 238-9.

[27] Alan Cairns, "The Electoral System and the Party System in Canada, 1921-1965," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 1 (March 1968), 55-80.

[28] F. Leslie Seidle, "The Canadian Electoral System and Proposals for Reform," in A. Brian Tanguay and Alain-G. Gagnon (eds.), *Canadian Parties in Transition, Second Edition,* (Toronto: Nelson, 1996), 292.

[29] Examples included proposals from the Pepin-Robarts Task Force on Canadian Unity, federal NDP leader Ed Broadbent, and William Irvine, *Does Canada Need a New Electoral System?* (Kingston: Queen's University Press, 1979). For a comprehensive review up to 1985, see William Irvine, "A Review and Evaluation of Electoral System Reform Proposals," in Peter Aucoin (ed.), *Institutional Reforms for Representative Government, Royal Commission on Economic Union Research Volume 38,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 71-98.

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consideration of these reforms appeared to be highly influenced by the proximity of the crisis. After Quebec voted 'no' to negotiations around sovereignty association in 1980 what little pressure existed to fix Canada's problems via representation visibly slackened. Shortly thereafter Liberal Prime Minister Trudeau toyed with a proposal to add a mild element of PR to the House of Commons and gained the support of NDP leader Ed Broadbent to seriously consider it. But when NDP elites and activists voted against their leader's decision at the party's 1981 national convention, even this meagre initiative was shelved.[30] Ironically, the nationalist Parti Quebecois government was also embroiled in debate over voting system reform throughout this period, split between members committed to reform as a matter of principle, and more pragmatic activists and legislative members keen to hold on to government. Though the party and the government officially studied the question, its ultimate defeat as policy in the 1980s surprised few.[31] Proposals for a PR-elected Senate were floated a decade later during constitutional negotiations but again amounted to little.[32] It appeared that repeated crises involving regionalism, separatism and the constitution were not enough to get voting system reform an effective public or party hearing in Canada.

Just as concerns over minority representation alone could not secure voting system reform in the nineteenth century, attempts to change modern voting systems to further majority government in Ireland, provide for government alternation in the Netherlands, or address regional distortions all failed.

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[30] Donley Studlar, "Will Canada Seriously Consider Electoral System Reform? Women and Aboriginals Should," in H. Milner (ed.), *Making Every Vote Count*, 125.

[31] Henry Milner, "Obstacles to Electoral Reform," *The American Review of Canadian Studies*, (Spring 1994), 39-55.

[32] Richard Johnston, Andre Blais, Elisabeth Gidengil and Neil Nevitte, *The Challenge of Direct Democracy: The 1992 Canadian Referendum*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 55-6.

France

Canadian failure in the 1970s and 1980s is striking when compared to the (temporary) French success in changing their voting system just a few years later. In 1986, France switched from its traditional Second Ballot voting system, used continuously since 1958, to a PR system much like the one they had adopted in 1945. The decision was immediately controversial, with little public or elite support. President Francois Mitterrand defended the move in terms of electoral fairness (that PR would more accurately reflect party support), his Socialist party's longstanding commitment to the change, and the fact that the government had already introduced PR for local and regional elections. He claimed the decision was above politics as the previous right-wing administration had also introduced PR for elections to the European Union.[33] But his opponents and most academic commentators cried foul, accusing the Socialist party of electoral self-interest and institutional manipulation. Sub-national election results over the previous three years had suggested that the first left government in modern French history was heading for a crushing defeat.[34] Critics argued that Mitterrand was only interested in PR to help mitigate his party's expected losses in the coming election and as a means of splitting his right-wing opposition. There were forces even within the Socialist government against the change as they felt it would limit the party's return to power.[35] Certainly France was not facing anything like the regional or separatist threats

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[33] John Frears, "The French Electoral System in 1986: PR by Lists and Highest Average," *Parliamentary Affairs*, 39:4 (October 1986), 489-90; Byron Criddle, "Electoral Systems in France," *Parliamentary Affairs*, 45:1 (January 1992), 113-15. Though as Criddle points out, the small element of proportionality added to the municipal voting systems in 1982 appeared more like electoral engineering than the highly proportional party list system adopted for European elections in 1979.

[34] D.S. Bell and Byron Criddle, "Presidential Dominance Denied: The French Parliamentary Election of 1986," *Parliamentary Affairs*, 39:4 (October 1986), 477.

[35] Andrew Knapp, "Proportional but Bipolar" France's Electoral System in 1986," *West European Politics*, 10:1 (January 1987), 91-2. Criddle suggests that the Socialists' penchant for PR at sub-national levels had less to do with democratic idealism than Mitterrand's desire to 'divide and rule' all competing political arenas. See Criddle , "Electoral Systems in France," 115.

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that Canada was dealing with. Yet voting system reform was moving forward, apparently just to prevent the reigning government from losing too badly in the coming elections.

As an explanation for the change, the Socialist party's immediate electoral self-interest only goes so far. In the French case, the larger social and economic context behind the Socialist party's strategy is crucial to making sense of their efforts. Mitterrand did not merely seek to shore up Socialist representation and encourage party fissures on the right with his adoption of PR, he hoped to shift his party's location in the party system toward the centre, thus marginalizing the Communists on the left and drawing centrists away from the political right. The Socialists' experience in government from 1981 to 1985 convinced party elites that something about their political coalition-making would have to give. Mitterrand had been elected President in 1981 by linking a Socialist-dominated united-left with centrist political support, which he quickly turned into a left parliamentary majority in early legislative elections shortly thereafter. After two decades of effort, the left was finally in power nationally in France. But this governing coalition immediately faced seemingly insurmountable problems of national economic decline, international economic pressure, and conflicting policy objectives from its far left and centre. Not only did the government have to manage the inflated expectations of its followers, but its bold policy prescriptions to go beyond the postwar Keynesian consensus now faced dire economic conditions and powerful national and international opposition to even the maintenance of the *status quo*. Though the government initially attempted to introduce their programme through 1981-2 they eventually lost their nerve given the scope of the problems and their own internal divisions.[36] Resisting the

[36] George Ross, "Destroyed by the dialectic: Politics, the decline of Marxism, and the new middle strata in France," *Theory and Society*, 16 (1987), 27, 31. The government's efforts are given in more detail in George Ross and Jane Jenson, "Strategy and Contradiction in the Victory of French Socialism," in R. Miliband and J. Saville (eds.), *Socialist Register 1981*, (London: Merlin Press, 1981), 98-103; Maurice Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front, 1936-1996*, chapter 19, "Keynesianism in One Country: The Socialist Experiment," 356-81; and Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, chapter 19, "The French Experiment," 534-71. For a review of the divisions within the Socialist party and their larger left coalition

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pressures for neo-liberal policies coming from both inside France and internationally would have required a social mobilization which neither of the decaying party organizations on the left felt confident they could muster. While there were forces within the Socialist party keen to defend national economic sovereignty in the face of emergent globalizing pressures, others were keen to 'modernize' the party and its policy commitments. When Mitterrand failed to convince others in the European Union to join France in defending the postwar model of economic regulation, the balance of forces within the party shifted to the right. The Socialists embarked on a dramatic reversal of economic policy, the Communists left the government, and a host of neo-liberal policies were introduced despite the opposition of most of the government's supporters.[37]

Voting system reform emerged out of the Socialists' governing, coalition-making and electoral difficulties, informed by their organizational decline and the sense that no alternatives to neo-liberal economic policies were viable. The two left parties were now split on economic questions, with the Communists accusing the Socialist government of ruling in the interests of the rich and middle classes. Relations between the parties since 1984, when the four Communist ministers resigned, remained adversarial. Yet given the coalition-making pressures created by the Second Ballot, the Socialists would need to come to some understanding with Communists before the election in 1986 or risk splitting left support. And policy differences were not the only difficulty facing the left. The increasing weakness of the PCF - polls in 1985 suggested the party was down to just

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with the PCF in the 1970s, see Ross and Jenson, "Strategy and Contradiction in the Victory of French Socialism," 72-103.

[37] Debates within the government over the policy shift are recounted in Leo Panitch, "Socialist Renewal and the Labour Party," in R. Miliband, L. Panitch and J. Saville (eds.), Socialist Register 1988, (London: Merlin Press, 1988), 323-4; and Helleiner, States and the Re-emergence of Global Finance, 140-3. Yet it would wrong to characterize the shift in government policy as a complete turnaround. As would be the case later in New Zealand, the left government did recognize the need to forward some of its traditional policy goals, even as it moved right on others. Thus the expansion of certain social entitlements (higher minimum wage, shorter work week, improved social security) was accompanied by wage controls and higher unemployment. See Bell and Criddle, "Presidential Dominance Denied: The French Parliamentary Election of 1986," 478-9.

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10%, half of their 1978 total - was a problem for the Socialists as well, as it represented a declining pool of second ballot support.[38] This was another reason that Socialists were keen find some way to reach toward the political centre for governing allies. It was here that the Socialist leadership became serious about making some change to the electoral rules. The government's subsequent decision to adopt PR eliminated the need for the two left parties to cooperate electorally, thus weakening left electoral pressure for the Socialists to moderate their embrace of economic liberalism. Though they expected to lose the coming election, Socialist strategists felt that their tough economic decisions would eventually redound to their favour, and contribute to a return to power, perhaps with more centrist allies, especially as they expected PR to help split the already fractious French right.[39]

Mitterrand's strategy was plausible given the rancorous political in-fighting that had dogged the French right from the late 1970s into the 1980s. But in the end the President's right-wing opponents out-maneuvered him by working out an effective electoral agreement to resist the fragmenting pressures of the new PR system.[40] And given that the PR model adopted was only regionally proportional, the right managed to turn a plurality of support into a majority of seats.[41] Still, the right majority was narrow and the Socialist hope to draw centrist politicians away from the new government and into a coalition with them might still have come to pass but for a number of obscure Gaullist constitutional provisions that allowed the new right-wing PM to essentially rule by decree and repeal PR without any parliamentary debate.[42] Though the right had just

[38] Bell and Criddle, "Presidential Dominance Denied: The French Parliamentary Election of 1986," 477-8.
[39] Knapp, "Proportional but Bipolar" France's Electoral System in 1986," 100-1; Larkin, France Since the Popular Front, 1936-1996, 378-80.
[40] Ella Searls, "The French Right in Opposition 1981-1986," Parliamentary Affairs, 39:4 (October 1986), 474-6; Knapp, "Proportional but Bipolar" France's Electoral System in 1986," 97-100.
[41] For a concise overview of the workings of the system, see Knapp, "Proportional but Bipolar" France's Electoral System in 1986," 93-5.
[42] Bell and Criddle, "Presidential Dominance Denied: The French Parliamentary Election of 1986," 483; Knapp, "Proportional but Bipolar" France's Electoral System in 1986," 104-6, 108. Specifically, Knapp

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won a majority under PR, they still favoured the Second Ballot as the best way to manage their coalition and with public opinion in their favour they quickly restored it. The Socialists had hoped to use PR to rejig the party system and their place within it but the gambit failed (as it turned out, the party system changed even without PR). The mainstream right did not need PR to pursue their agenda (especially after the Socialists themselves had opened the door to neo-liberalism) and a move away from it would lessen the impact of far right competitors like the National Front. Nor did a left divided on its basic economic vision for France pose a threat in need of containment. Indeed, when the Socialists returned to power in 1988 they too lost interest in PR, having succeeded in moving themselves more firmly into the centre, amid collapsing support for the PCF.[43]

Voting System Reform in the 1990s

At the start of 1990s a public discussion of voting system reforms seemed to bubble up in various established democracies, though few credited it as a serious threat to existing institutional arrangements. The temporary switch to PR in France was seen as an aberration, a peculiar exception to an almost iron law of political science and pragmatic political analysis that insisted that institutions like voting rules simply could not be changed under normal (i.e. non-crisis) political circumstances. Yet by the end of the decade three established democracies had changed their voting systems, another had introduced changes at the sub-national level, and the discussion of voting system reform appeared to be spreading to even more countries. The reforming countries - New Zealand, Italy, Japan, Britain - appeared to have little in common at first glance. Nor

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notes how Chirac used articles 49.3 (non-confidence) and 38 (decree powers) to force the change back to the Second Ballot without parliamentary debate. Article 49.3 was important because it forced deputies voting against a measure to effectively vote non-confidence in the government, a condition that ultimately forced most centre-right politicians into line to sustain the new right-wing government.

[43] For instance, the Socialists returned to power in 1988 with centrist allies instead of the PCF. See Larkin, *France Since the Popular Front, 1936-1996*, 398-9.

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were the different processes or end result of change remotely similar, beyond a broad public revolt against existing political forces and a shift to some new form of voting. As a result, most explanations of the changes have focused on the de-alignment of party systems across western countries, combined with the changing values of citizens and decline of traditional cleavages, and a host of country-specific conjunctural factors. There is little doubt that party system change was key in spurring the reform process, but this had less to do with value change or an end of the salience of traditional (particularly class) cleavages. Instead, all countries - influenced by the changing international economy and pressures from within and outside their borders - witnessed left parties attempting to shift positions on the ideological spectrum. These efforts sparked a struggle over existing politicized cleavages and, as in France, created an opening for the consideration of institutional reforms like changes to the voting system. In some cases, the institutional reform terrain was taken up by popular forces to limit the movement of left parties, while in others left parties pushed the issue to marginalize former supporters or create space for their own political re-invention.

New Zealand

In 1993 a bare majority of New Zealand's voters opted for a new proportional voting system in a binding referendum. While scholars have argued over the fine points of the process leading to change, the broad contours of the story are fairly consistent across differing accounts and can be briefly sketched out. Historically, New Zealand developed a two-party system with highly majoritarian tendencies. From the 1930s on the Labour and National parties campaigned on explicit programs and were seen to enjoy a 'mandate' if they won a majority of seats, even if that rested on a minority of votes. High voter turnout and alternation in government were seen by many as confirmations of

the legitimacy and effective functioning of the system. Then, from the 1970s on, the traditional system broke down amid the rise of third parties, highly disproportional or perverse election results, and the apparent end of the mandate approach to campaigning. Analysts explain these developments as resulting from the breakdown of traditional trading relationships, the de-alignment and diversification of the electorate, an incomplete process of institutional reform, and a new policy independence on the part of the major parties no longer bound to traditional cleavages like class. By the late 1980s, the rapidity of political and economic change, combined with the dramatic shift to the right of the traditionally collectivist Labour Party, fueled complaints about New Zealand's highly majoritarian democratic system, focusing particular attention on the voting system. Labour empowered a Royal Commission to study voting system reform, and promised a binding referendum on the issue while campaigning in 1987, but later shelved the report and declined to act. But public disgust with both major parties and politicians in general moved a National government to honour the referendum pledge in the early 1990s.[44]

Conventional explanations of New Zealand's reforms essentially rest on de-alignment, peppered with some recognition of institutional factors and political misjudgement. These behavioural explanations, buttressed with neoclassical assumptions about economic performance, suggest that voters started moving away from the major parties in the 1970s for social and economic reasons. This led to highly disproportional election results in 1972 and 1975, and perverse results in 1978 and 1981(when the most popular party - Labour - lost both elections). Though they elected few members, new third parties opened new policy space, specifically bringing ideas of economic liberalization to mainstream political discussion. De-alignment is also credited with

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[44] The basics of the story can be found in David Denemark, "Choosing MMP in New Zealand: Explaining the 1993 Electoral Reform," in Shugart and Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed Member Electoral Systems*, 70-95; and Jackson and McRobie, *New Zealand Adopts Proportional Representation.*

weakening the hold of traditional political cleavages over the two main parties, contributing to a decline in the mandate approach to campaigning. Both National in 1978 and Labour in 1984 took up radically new policy directions once in office that they did not mention at election time, much less campaign on. For most analysts, the close proximity of more than a decade of curious election results, combined with public frustration over the lack of barriers to Labour's radical new policy direction, conspired to bring a normally ignored institution like the voting system under public scrutiny and criticism. From there, repeated political misjudgments kept the issue in the public realm - striking a Royal Commission, promising a binding referendum, finally holding a vote on the question. In the end, all the political prevarication on the issue was blamed for aiding its success, with the result characterized as a kind of "voters' vengeance."[45]

While the broad outlines of the conventional explanations are uncontroversial, the emphasis on de-alignment and an undifferentiated public disaffection obscures a great deal about why the reform was ultimately successful. In the end, de-alignment was much less important in furthering the reform than the struggle to alter the cleavage structure of New Zealand politics. Conventional accounts gloss over the struggle within the Labour party over contentious issues like economic liberalization, tending to over-estimate the degree of cleavage decline. And in their focus on a "voters' vengeance" fueling voting system reform, they also fail to note the important cleavage dimension here too - that 'yes' and 'no' in the referendum vote divided broadly along left and right cleavage dimensions.

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[45] See Denemark, "Choosing MMP in New Zealand," 70-95; Jack Nagel, "Social Choice in a Pluralitarian Democracy: The Politics of Market Liberalization in New Zealand," *British Journal of Political Science*, 28 (1998), 223-67; and Jack Vowles, "The Politics of Electoral Reform in New Zealand," *International Political Science Review*, 16:1 (1995), 95-115. While these authors have different perspectives on certain aspects of the reform process, their approach to the broad outlines of what occurred are roughly similar.

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As Peter Mair has noted, de-alignment is often wrongly explained by cleavage decline.[46] Though parties may change, the cleavages that sustained them may in fact remain. For instance, strong class cleavages in Scandinavia have witnessed the rise of new or renewed left parties recently as Social Democratic parties have moved closer to the political centre. In New Zealand, the rightward drift of Labour in the late 1980s was answered by strong showings for the more leftist New Labour and its progressive coalition partners in the Alliance in the 1990s. Of course, cleavage structures can and do change - in New Zealand new dimensions have opened up to include environmental concerns and visible minority representation. No doubt the class cleavage itself has changed considerably with the internationalization of the economy and downsizing of the government workforce. The point here is that parties and cleavages are related in a dynamic way, and changes in their relations require explanation, not simply assertions or correlations. In New Zealand, the historically dominant class cleavage did not simply decline under demographic pressures or changes in lifestyles of working people. There were explicit efforts to remake it, diminish it, or sustain it.

Historically, New Zealand's cleavage structure was premised on an urban working class, farmers, middle class professionals and small entrepreneurs, and a nation-based business sector. Long dependent on Britain for trade, early political competition witnessed various coalitions of these groups battle each other while seeking economic guarantees from the state. Initially farmers dominated parliament, sometime working with organized labour, sometimes opposing them. A Labour party emerged during WWI, and only became a contender for government amid the economic crisis of the 1930s.[47] Unlike Europe, or even neighboring Australia, the rise of a state-oriented Labour party in

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[46] Peter Mair, "Parameters of Change," in P. Mair (ed.), *The West European Party System*, 208-17.

[47] Christoper Wilkes, "The State as an Historical Subject: A Periodization of State Formation in New Zealand," in Brian Roper and Chris Rudd (eds.), *State and Economy in New Zealand*, (Aukland: Oxford University Press, 1993), 226-8; Robert Bremer with Tom Brooking, "Federated Farmers and the State," in Roper and Rudd (eds.), *State and Economy in New Zealand*, 108-12.

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New Zealand did not spark a movement for electoral reform for a number of reasons. First, as in most Anglo-American countries, the franchise and responsible government were extended in a gradual and rather ambiguous manner. For instance, though effective full male, and later female, suffrage came early in New Zealand, the democratization process remained arguably incomplete until 1947, when the country became officially independent from Britain.[48] Second, by that time, Labour's opponents had managed to unite behind a single party banner (National) and accepted some aspects of Labour's interventionist agenda. By contrast, in Australia, opponents of their Labour party could not merge and voting system reforms were passed at both the state and federal level. Of course, timing is important. For instance, in Australia, the nature of farming and ranching led to early efforts to unionize and the rapid emergence of a competitive, potentially governing Labour Party before WWI. Many of the same fears motivating electoral reform in Europe at the time were also present in Australia. In New Zealand, however, farming was organized very differently and the social basis for a politicized class cleavage only came later. By the time NZ Labour took power in 1935, many of its statist proposals were being popularized across western industrialized countries and had gained broad popular support, especially given the economic conditions of the time.[49]

Though largely put in place by Labour in the 1930s and 1940s, the postwar welfare state was presided over by the National Party, who forestalled Labour's return by maintaining the re-distributive welfare state while satisfying business and farmers with tariffs and subsidies.[50] But the breakdown of the US-led system of managed world trade in the 1970s created real economic problems for New Zealand, compounded by the shift

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[48] Brady, *Democracy in the Dominions: A Comparative Study of Institutions, Third Edition*, 289.

[49] Some claim that Labour's victory was less controversial because New Zealand had always had a relatively 'egalitarian' approach to politics, pointing to the early emergence of welfare state there at the turn of the century. But others argue that New Zealand's welfare measures were meagre before Labour's win in 1935. See Chris Rudd, "The New Zealand Welfare State: Origin, Development, and Crisis," in Roper and Rudd (eds.), *State and Economy in New Zealand*, 227.

[50] Wilkes, "The State as an Historical Subject ," 203-4.

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of British trade interests from its former colonies to Europe. Both Labour and National struggled to formulate and implement a viable alternative. In 1975, National moved decisively onto Labour territory, introducing an active Keynesian policy of public investment and demand management. By the early 1980s, amid a record recession, Keynesian approaches were under intense criticism everywhere.[51] In New Zealand, National's move left alienated many supporters and helped boost third party voting to its highest levels ever - to around 20% in 1978, 1981 and 1984.[52] Campaigning in the 1984 election, Labour gave little indication that they would move far from National's basic policy direction.[53]

Much has been written about Labour's neo-liberal policy innovations after returning to government in 1984. Some suggest they 'abandoned outright' their traditional social democratic commitments, effectively becoming a party of the 'new right,' while others characterize their actions as representing a 'decisive break with the past.'[54] Why an established party with a stable base of support would do such a thing generated a host of explanations. Some pointed out that the Labour party caucus was no longer recruited from the working class and that the professionals that had mostly replaced them understood the 'left' more in lifestyle terms rather than class. Others suggested that the new Labour government had a core of neo-liberal ideologues who worked effectively with neo-liberal colleagues in the influential Treasury department. Still others pointed to the necessity of the reforms or the influence on Labour party leaders of the success of the fledgling neo-liberal New Zealand Party in the 1984

[51] For a critical discussion of this period, see Brian Roper, "The End of the Golden Weather: New Zealand's Economic Crisis," in Roper and Rudd (eds.), *State and Economy in New Zealand,* 1-25.
[52] Nigel Roberts, "Nats, Fat Cats and Democrats: The Opposition Parties," in J. Boston and M. Holland (eds.), *The Fourth Labour Government,* (Aukland: Oxford University Press, 1987), 39.
[53] Nagel, "Social Choice in a Pluralitarian Democracy," 251.
[54] Denemark, "Choosing MMP in New Zealand," 81; Bruce Jesson, "The Disintegration of a Labour Tradition: New Zealand Politics in the 1980s," *New Left Review,* 192 (March/April 1992), 37; and J. Boston and M. Holland, "The Fourth Labour Government: Transforming the Political Agenda," in Boston and Holland (eds.), *The Fourth Labour Government,* 2.

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election.[55] However, all appeared to agree that the weakening of class cleavages facilitated the process. Certainly, at an organizational level, Labour's membership decline and move to advertizing-based voter contact mirrored larger first world trends away from direct links with supporters. Labour's re-election in 1987 amid declining support for third parties appeared to further buttress this view, suggesting that the party faced no real penalties for their actions.[56]

In toting up the many changes from 1984 to 1990, Labour's policy shift appears to most commentators as decisive, right-wing, and unimpeded by much effective opposition. But a closer look at the actual decision-making process suggests that Labour's efforts were neither brazenly right-wing, nor free from consideration of their traditional supporters. Wendy Larner argues that while Labour recognized the need for market reforms, they initially tried to introduce 'more market' as a "means of achieving social democracy."[57] The previous National government had left New Zealand with a huge public debt and floundering economy. Debates within the Labour Party reflected a concern to stimulate growth as one means of maintaining and possibly furthering equity through the party's traditional focus on social spending. One way to accomplish this was through exacting greater efficiencies through the public sector portion of the economy. Buttressing this view is Labour's early rejection of privatization as a means of reforming the public sector. Instead, Labour established state-owned enterprises (SOE) that would

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[55] Jack Nagel reviews much of this debate in "Social Choice in a Pluralitarian Democracy."

[56] For membership decline, see Barry Gustafson, *Social Change and Party Organization: The New Zealand Labour Party Since 1945,* (London: Sage, 1976). However, as Vowles notes, even then Gustafson had underlined that this could not be attributed to decline in Labour's support base amongst the working class, as little decline could be discovered. Since then, Vowles traces a continuing link between Labour and its traditional cleavages, with some expansion into white collar and professional ranks. See Jack Vowles, "The Fourth Labour Government: Ends, Means, and for Whom?" in Boston and Holland (eds.), *The Fourth Labour Government,* 23-4.

[57] Wendy Larner, "Governing Neoliberal New Zealand," *Studies in Political Economy,* 52 (Spring 1997), 9. Whether Labour's leadership were being honest in this view is less relevant than the fact that they had to make a case within the familiar normative terms of their class cleavage. In other words, their appeals are evidence they recognized some limits to how they could act, what they could act upon, etc.

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remain publicly owned but operate more like businesses.[58] Labour's distinctive approach

to 'market reform' is also evinced by stipulations that SOEs were to be 'good employers'

and have a 'sense of social responsibility.'[59] It was only later in Labour's second term,

amid a crushing economic downturn and a struggle within the party, that the onus shifted

to privatization.[60]

There is also much evidence that Labour's traditional class cleavage exercised

much pull, particularly in its first term. Early in the first term, the Labour government re-

instated compulsory unionism, scrapped wage controls, and allowed hikes as high as 15%

in the traditional national awards system. In education, Labour reduced class sizes and

hired more teachers, awarding them pay increases in the range of 25-36%. Nurses also

witnessed pay increases of 31-8%. No social programs were cut in the first term and a

Royal Commission on Social Policy report in 1986 was supposed to form the basis of an

expanded social safety net in Labour's second term.[61] In other words, though Labour

presided over a liberalizing of trade and economic regulation, their approach to industrial

relations and social programs remained consistent with the party's social democratic

legacy. And the party's strong anti-nuclear stand furthered their appeal with post-

material voters.

The more decisive shift to the right occurred in Labour's second term. Labour

secured re-election in 1987, though it did not escape unharmed. Labour's vote fell in its

traditional safe seats (though not to the point of losing them), precisely amongst the poor

and working classes most vulnerable to an internationalized market economy.

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[58] Larner, "Governing Neoliberal New Zealand," 17. The limits of Labour's 'solution' to the problems that would increasingly face left parties everywhere has received considerable critical attention: see Greg Albo, "'Competitive Austerity' and the Impasse of Capitalist Employment Policy," *Between Globalism and Nationalism: Socialist Register 1994*, 144-70; and Alan Zuege, "The Chimera of the Third Way," *Necessary and Unnecessary Utopias: Socialist Register 2000*, (Toronto: Fernwood, 1999), 87-114.
[59] Larner, "Governing Neoliberal New Zealand," 22.
[60] Thus Boston and Holland could write in 1987 that Labour's approach was not comparable to Thatcher and still reflected 'social democratic' values. See Boston and Holland, "The Fourth Labour Government," 7.
[61] Nagel, "Social Choice in a Pluralitarian Democracy," 254-5.

Meanwhile, the party did receive considerable financial support from the business community and voting support from fans of neoliberalism.[62] This new coalition of supporters behind Labour would prove highly unstable. When the economy dipped instead of recovering in the late 1980s the party was literally wrenched apart trying to sort out its direction. Amid ferocious battles at all levels of the party, the Labour government turned toward more and more neo-liberal 'solutions.'[63] By 1989 the parliamentary caucus was hopelessly divided and a breakaway left party, New Labour, was launched. Divided, Labour lost the 1990 election badly, and witnessed a new, more decisively neo-liberal National Party then apply those policies to Labour constituencies.

The failure of Labour's economic policies has also produced much debate. For the left, Labour's actions betrayed an ideological zeal for essentially unworkable economic ideas. For the right, Labour's failure was chalked up to 'sequencing' errors, particularly their failure to liberalize employment and social policy. But reliance on 'ideology' or 'error' as explanations again ignores important cleavage dimensions. Labour's 'sequence' of economic reforms were *not in error*, they faithfully reflected their contradictory cleavage bases. Early liberalizations targeted farmers and business - traditionally National Party constituencies - not working people directly.[64] However, in liberalizing financial markets, trade and investment, New Zealand's business sector was nearly completely remade in the period between 1985 and 1987, creating a new constituency of support for Labour. It helped that at this point National remained unclear

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[62] Nagel, "Social Choice in a Pluralitarian Democracy," 253-4. In fact, money from business, along with Labour's liberalization of media rules, aided the trend toward strengthening the leadership against activists in the party, and moving campaigns decisively into paid media.

[63] Opponents of Labour's right turn formed a 'Broad Left' group that won control of the party machinery at the party conference in 1987, but it had marginal influence on what Mair described as the 'party in government.' Still deep divisions broke out in caucus with Prime Minister Lange repeatedly breaking publicly with his finance minister Roger Douglas and his supporters, a situation that eventually led to Douglas' resignation in late 1988 and Lange's loss of the PM-ship in 1989. See Jane Kelsey, *Economic Fundamentalism*, (London: Pluto, 1995), 36-7.

[64] Bremer, "Federated Farmers and the State," 125; Nagel, "Social Choice in a Pluralitarian Democracy," 259-60.

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about its approach to neo-liberalism.[65] Thus Labour went into the 1987 election with support from opposing sides, and that tension carried through into a battle for control of the party and the legislative caucus over the next three years.

Dissent with the policy drift of Labour amongst supporters, activists and members eventually spilled over into the emerging public campaign for voting system reform. Though the issue had supporters from across the spectrum, Labour would prove a key source of experienced leaders, organizers, and perhaps most importantly, organizational links and resources. Meanwhile Labour backbenchers in parliament kept the issue on the agenda, either reminding the leadership of its promises or introducing their own private members bills to force the issue to a public vote.[66] In the end, against the wishes of most of its parliamentary party, Labour members and supporters decisively threw their support behind the proportional options in the two referendums. In fact, public surveys suggested that voting system reform essentially divided along the left/right cleavage line, with Labour, New Labour and a significant portion of the centrist New Zealand First electorate for change, while National voters stood opposed.[67] The business community, also sensing how voting system reform was connected to resistance to the neo-liberal reforms they supported, came out decisively against PR, pouring money into an anti-reform campaign that outspent its rivals nearly five to one.[68] In the end, the business-sponsored opposition managed to push the status quo single member plurality system to nearly the same levels of public support as the proportional reform proposal. The new MMP system barely passed with just 54% of the referendum vote.

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[65] Jesson, "The Disintegration of a Labour Tradition," 44-5, 51-2; Roberts, "Nats, Fat Cats and Democrats: The Opposition Parties,"45-6.

[66] Jackson and McRobie, *New Zealand Adopts Proportional Representation*, 51, 125, 164, 170-1.

[67] Peter Aimer, "From Westminster Plurality to Continental Proportionality: Electoral System Change in New Zealand," in Milner (ed.), *Making Every Vote Count: Reassessing Canada's Electoral System*, 155. Aimer credits Labour and Alliance supporters with casting 70% of the votes for MMP, while National supporters accounted for only 8%. See also Jackson and McRobie, *New Zealand Adopts Proportional Representation* , 251-7.

[68] Denemark, "Choosing MMP in New Zealand," 91.

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Voting system reform in New Zealand emerged against a backdrop of economic crisis and the political responses to it. The crisis was real - New Zealand's postwar economic regime could no longer be sustained in the face of changing world patterns of trade, particularly the loss of their main trading partner, Britain. But the political responses to the economic crisis were not pre-ordained by circumstances or economic theory.[69] Instead, the Labour Party embarked on a series of reforms that reflected both the pull of existing cleavages, and the new cleavages their actions produced. These reforms sparked considerable opposition within the party leading to battles for control of the party structure, caucus revolts, breakaway parties, and a humiliating loss in the 1990 election. Weaved amongst all this was discussion of New Zealand's voting system. Though initially investigated to satisfy Labour members' concerns about the perverse election results of 1978 and 1981, the voting system issue gained saliency amongst the party grassroots amid these struggles over policy and accountability, particularly between 1986 and 1990. When National came to power in 1990 pursuing a more vigorous neo-liberal approach, Labour activists and other progressives put even more energy into voting system reform. As survey work appears to confirm a strong left cleavage behind the pro-reform results, we may conclude that the victory was less an example of "voters' vengeance" than a specifically Labour voters' vengeance.

Italy

While New Zealanders agitated for a referendum on the voting system in the early days of the new National government, Italians were also attending to the question of voting system reform, though they already had a citizen-driven initiative-referendum mechanism to draw on. On June 9, 1991 Italian voters gave decisive support to a

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[69] As Geoff Bertram makes clear in "Keynesianism, Neoclassicism, and the State," in Roper and Rudd (eds.), *State and Economy in New Zealand*, 26-49.

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referendum initiative aimed at eliminating multiple preference voting in elections.[70] Though preference voting - a feature of the country's party list PR system long blamed for aiding corruption and vote-peddling - was hardly considered Italy's most serious institutional deficiency, the campaign against it became a rallying point for public frustration with the political system generally.[71] The referendum proved to be the first step in a decade-long struggle for institutional and political reform, a struggle that would lay low the existing party system, and challenge more central institutions like the country's controversial proportional voting arrangements. By 2000, the voting system alone had been subject to four separate reform initiatives. Why and how voting system reform became arguably the key strategy in a larger process of political and state reform is the subject of much debate and little consensus.

The 1991 referendum victory appeared to spark an unstoppable process of political and institutional unraveling. In the 1992 national elections the traditional ruling bloc of parties lost their majority for the first time since 1948. In the same year a judicial inquiry into political corruption in Milan uncovered a dense and far-reaching web of illegal political kickbacks; as the investigation - dubbed *Tangentopoli* ('kickback city') - expanded, a considerable number of parliamentarians were eventually brought up on corruption charges. Facing political and legal challenges, and mindful of new referendum campaigns aimed at reforming local and national elections, politicians tried to reform themselves - with mixed results. Though a bicameral commission of Parliament in 1992 managed to reform local election laws, no agreement could be reached on a new national

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[70] Patrick McCarthy, "The referendum of 9 June," in S. Hellman and G. Pasquino (eds.), *Italian Politics: A Review, Volume 7*, (New York: Pinter Publishers, 1992), 11.

[71] P. Corbetta, and A. Parisi, "The Referendum on the Electoral Law for the Senate: Another Momentous April," in C. Mershon and G. Pasquino (eds.), *Italian Politics: A Review, Volume 9, Ending the First Republic*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 76.

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voting system. Despite all the upheaval, it appeared that many politicians still believed the crisis would blow over.[72]

The results of the 1993 referendum to effectively replace the Senate's version of PR with a much less proportional mixed system clearly signaled that there would be no return to 'normal.' Turnout exceeded the 1991 preference referendum; 75% of registered voters came to the polls with 82.7% in favour of reducing proportionality. Though Parliament toyed with other less far-reaching voting reforms, in the end they altered the electoral laws in line with the referendum results.[73] The 1994 national election, the first conducted under the new mixed system of single member plurality (75% of the seats) and compensatory list (25% of the seats), pleased no one. Under the new rules even more parties managed to gain entry to parliament, government was still the product of coalition wrangling, and the promise of more stable government remained unfulfilled - the new administration fell in less than a year. Attention now shifted to eliminating the last vestiges of proportionality altogether.

The renewal of the party system so clearly marked in the 1994 election appeared to change the dynamic and possibilities for more far-reaching electoral and constitutional reforms.[74] Where the old leading parties had been either committed to proportional voting (Communists) or unwilling to risk change (Christian Democrats, Socialists), the new leading parties (Forza Italia, Democratic Party of the Left) were committed to

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[72] P. Furlong, "Political Catholicism and the strange death of the Christian Democrats," in S. Gundle and S. Parker (eds.), *The New Italian Republic: From the Fall of the Berlin Wall to Berlusconi*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 65.

[73] Simon Parker, "Electoral reform and political change in Italy, 1991-1994," in S. Gundle and S. Parker (eds.), *The New Italian Republic*, 45-6.

[74] Though 'renewal' is a rather misleading description of what has come to pass. The new major right wing party is largely a media creation, with little internal democracy or membership base. It benefited from the commercialization and subsequent near monopolization of Italy's media system by its founder Berlusconi when he had strong links with the corrupt PSI-led government. See Stephen Gundle and Noelleanne O'Sullivan, "The crisis of 1992-1994 and the reform of Italian public broadcasting," *Modern Italy*, 1:1 (1995), 70-81; Joseph Farrell, "Berlusconi and the Forza Italia: new forces or old?" *Modern Italy*, 1:1 (1995), 40-52; and Gianpietro Mazzoleni, "The RAI: Restructuring and Reform," in C. Mershon and G. Pasquino (eds.), *Italian Politics: Ending the First Republic*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 151-63.

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majoritarian over proportional voting rules, though agreement on a specific alternative eluded them. In fact, the 1996 national election was dominated by competing visions of a reformed Italian state and its institutions from both the right and left coalitions. However, when the new centre-left government began pursuing arguably neo-liberal policies, the right-wing Forza Italia cooled its reform rhetoric for fear of being pushed too far from the centre. [75] The lack of consensus about an acceptable alternative ultimately hobbled the efforts of a new bicameral committee of Parliament in 1997 and 1998. [76] The failure triggered yet another round of referendums in 1999 and 2000, both times with the express purpose of repealing the proportional element of the voting system. Surprisingly, the first initiative in 1999 narrowly failed for lack of quorum, while a second effort in 2000 witnessed voter turnout plunge to just 32.4%, suggesting the limits of referendum-driven reform had been reached. [77] With the election of an apparently stable majority government in 2001, arguably the key objective of reform forces, it is possible that the era of voting system reform is now over.

More startling than the scope and depth of the changes to the Italian political system in the 1990s for many observers was the fact that change occurred at all. Just one year prior to the preference referendum in 1991 veteran Italian political scientist Gianfranco Pasquino described voting system reform as an 'obscure object of desire,' noting "there is nothing more political than reforming an electoral system" and "nothing more difficult ... than reforming a consolidated electoral system." [78] Given that nearly all

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[75] S. Fabbrini, "Has Italy rejected the referendum path to change? The failed referenda of May 2000," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 6:1 (Spring 2001), 48-50. Della Sala argues that the centre-left adopted neo-liberal, market reforms as part of a larger strategy to break up the material basis of the centre-right's long hegemony - clientelism. See Vincent Della Sala, "Politics Through Markets: The Italian Left Between the First Republic and EMU," Paper presented to the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Sherbrooke, 6-8 June 1999, 25-6.

[76] Gianfranco Pasquino, "A Postmortem of the Bicamerale," in D. Hine and S. Vassallo (eds.), *Italian Politics, A Review, Volume 14, The Return of Politics*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 102.

[77] Fabbrini, "Has Italy rejected the referendum path to change?" 40, 52.

[78] Gianfranco Pasquino, "That Obscure Object of Desire: A New Electoral Law for Italy," in Noiret (ed.), *Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms*, 479.

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political parties - large or small - had an interest in maintaining the existing system, it was not clear how any reform would be possible.

A host of explanations have surfaced that largely agree on the key events contributing to Italy's recent party system change and institutional reform - the fall of Communism, the rise of the Northern League, *Tangentopoli*, the judicial 'clean hands' investigations, and the pressures of European economic integration - though each tends to assign greater weight and decisive influence to a different one. Beyond assessing the precise balance of factors propelling the changes was the question of timing - why did reform only appear to become possible in 1990s? Many of the complaints - corruption, clientelism, lack of alternation in government, etc. - were longstanding and publicly well known. What had prevented them from fuelling reform previously? Here a number of theories point to a combination of forces, specifically the impact of particular conjunctural factors - i.e. the specific events mentioned above - on lingering and widespread structural problems - the need for thorough-going state reform, the unsustainable costs of clientelism, the increasing economic and social integration with Europe.[79]

But here, as with our previous case study, insufficient attention tends to be paid to the role of parties, and the cleavages sustaining them, in fueling the reform. This is surprising given that few doubt the importance of Italy's distinctive party system in giving shape to the postwar democratic system and its institutions. The strength of the left coming out of WWII had assured the adoption of a highly proportional voting system. However, when a united left comprising the Socialist (PSI) and Communist (PCI) parties did poorly in the initial legislative election of 1948, the centre-right Christian Democrats

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[79] Stefano Guzzini, "The 'Long Night of the First Republic': years of clientelistic implosion in Italy," *Review of International Political Economy*, 2:1 (Winter 1995), 27-61; M. Bull and M. Rhodes, "Between crisis and transition: Italian politics in the 1990s," *West European Politics*, 20:1 (Jan 1997), 1-13; Phillip Daniels, "Italy: Rupture and Regeneration?" in Broughton and Donovan (eds.), *Changing Party Systems in Western Europe*, 72-95.

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(DC) tried to reform the system toward a more majoritarian orientation. Yet this turned out to be risky strategy. Though the DC and its coalition partners nearly achieved a majority in 1953, the PCI moved ahead of the PSI and became the leading party on the left, a position they subsequently never relinquished. In fact, voting support for the PCI only increased over the next two decades. As a result, the DC backed away from majoritarianism for fear it might one day benefit the left and push the DC too far from the centre.[80] As long as the DC could straddle the centre-right, and use the state to distribute largesse, an acceptable political stasis could be maintained.[81]

Aiding this was the state and organization of Italy's economy. Italy's postwar economic development has been described as an example of 'bastard modernization.'[82] Development has been highly uneven - somewhat industrial in the north, still highly agricultural in the south. For most of the postwar period the DC patched together a national coalition with business preferments in the north and subsidies for the south. An elaborate system of clientelism effectively traded votes for government largesse, aided by Cold War-inspired preferential treatment from the US, fueling widespread inefficiencies and corruption. The fact that the largest alternative party was the Communists only served to lodge the DC in place. However, rising labour militancy and the breakdown of the postwar regime of managed international trade in the 1970s created both economic and political problems for the maintenance of the *status quo*. For a time, the PCI sustained the DC in power as part of their 'historic compromise' strategy of getting closer to national power.

Into the 1980s, though the country's economic problems hardly abated, the *status quo* was re-asserted by the DC in coalition now with the rightward-moving PSI. Interest

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[80] Pietro Scoppola, "The Christian Democrats and the Political Crisis," *Modern Italy*, 1:1 (1995), 19.

[81] Di Palma, "The Available State: Problems of Reform," 152-3.

[82] Guilio Sapelli, "The Italian Crisis and Capitalism," *Modern Italy*, 1:1 (1995), 91; Sidney Tarrow, "Italy: Crisis, Crises, or Transition?" in Lange and Tarrow, *Italy in Transition*, 174.

in institutions like voting systems also revived after an absence of more than two decades. As early as the late 1970s, various members of the DC and PSI had mooted calls for consideration of the German mixed system or the French double ballot. The Bozzi commission of the 1980s explored voting system reform but lacked sufficient political party support to do anything about it. Countless academics called for reform, particularly for a British-style single member plurality system, but they too lacked any party elite backers or public influence.[83]

The key barrier to change was opposition from most members of the two key parties, the DC and the PCI. Both feared that any shift away from PR would benefit the other. Though many observers credit de-alignment with breaking the deadlock, pointing particularly to the rise of the Northern Leagues, it was re-alignment on the left that arguably opened the space for institutional reform.[84] Long before the fall of the eastern bloc, Italy's 'frozen' party system was starting to melt. Under Bettino Craxi, the PSI moved to the right and maneuvered themselves to the front rank of the coalition government with the DC.[85] The PCI too were re-examining their position in the political system, given the meagre results obtained from their 'historic compromise' strategy.[86] Throughout the late 1980s the PCI debated its future, embarking on a thorough-going reform process in March 1989, before the unanticipated fall of the eastern bloc.[87] With the PSI enacting arguably right-wing policies in coalition with the DC, the PCI attempted to reposition themselves as social democrats. But in doing so the party fractured, with a

[83] Review of the debate can be found in G. Pasquino, "That Obscure Object of Desire," and G. Pasquino, "Reforming the Italian constitution," Journal of Italian Studies, 3:1 (1998), 42-54.
[84] Besides, as regional parties, the Northern Leagues would only benefit from any shift toward majoritarian voting, a fact DC elites were well aware of.
[85] Stephen Gundle, "The rise and fall of Craxi's Socialist Party," in S. Gundle and S. Parker (eds.), The New Italian Republic, 90.
[86] Stephen Hellman, "Italian Communism in Crisis," in Miliband et al (eds.), Socialist Register 1988, 244-88.
[87] Stephen Hellman, "Italian Communism in the First Republic," in S. Gundle and S. Parker (eds.), The New Italian Republic, 82-3.

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significant group of members splitting off to form a new party, Communist Refoundation. Though the split initially weakened the PCI, now renamed the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), it ultimately strengthened their focus and altered their strategy. Severed from the more orthodox elements of their old class cleavage, the PDS had more freedom to move toward the centre. As a result, the party, long the strongest defender of PR, now committed itself to voting system reform in favour of a French-style majority system. The PDS believed that a majority system would help break the clientelist links that fueled corruption and kept the DC in power.[88] As for the DC, the party's long-running internal warfare took on a new dimension as the 'glue' that held the organization together - patronage and clientelism - increasingly came into conflict with the more global strategies of its business supporters, particularly in the north.[89]

In examining the upheaval in Italian politics in the 1990s, much attention has been paid to the independent-minded prosecutors, the non-party technocrats brought in to run the government at different times, and the renegade politicians like DC MP Mario Segni who became publicly associated with leading the reform cause. But the role of the parties, particularly on the left, has tended to be overlooked. Though reformers in the 1990s struck upon the referendum as a means to electoral reform, successfully using it to end multiple preference voting in 1991, and effectively forcing a shift from the country's highly proportional party list form of PR to a less proportional mixed voting system in 1993, it must be remembered that party organization played a strong role in facilitating this process. In fact, the signature campaigns to get the referendums before the public crucially benefited from the political parties, or the factions within them, who thought

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[88] For background on the shifting strategies of the PDS and its key role in the new left bloc, see Martin Rhodes, "Re-inventing the Left: The Origins of Italy's Progressive Alliance," in Mershon and Pasquino (eds.), *Italian Politics: Ending the First Republic*, 113-34.
[89] Guzzini, "The 'Long Night of the First Republic'," 51-2.

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they could benefit from the changes.[90] Specifically, the remaking of the political left opened a space for a cross-cleavage campaign in favour of reform between various elements of the DC and the former Communists in the PDS. And the uneven party support for subsequent changes, specifically the indifference of Forza Italia and the opposition of Communist Refoundation, goes a long way toward explaining why efforts to eliminate proportionality altogether, either by members of parliament (1992, 1997-8) or by public referendum (1999, 2000), failed repeatedly.[91]

Thus the actions of the judiciary, technocrats and renegade politicians only make sense when put into a larger context of the party system change being fueled by shifting cleavage structures, the challenges facing political organizations, and the new neoliberal economic environment encroaching on Italy as it became further integrated into the European Union. Italy's postwar party system had grown out of the dramatic mobilizations for and against fascism at the end of the war, giving rise to evenly balanced mass party system tipped only slightly in favour of the centre-right and against a Communist-dominated centre-left. As Italy was drawn into America's Cold War, an economic and political framework emerged to help maintain the DC in power, involving US subsidies for trade and development and an internal system of economic payoffs that sustained the political hegemony of the centre-right. By the 1980s the political organizations sustaining these arrangements - on both the left and right - were in decline. Meanwhile, the economic relationships cementing the traditional deal-making of the

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[90] Mark Donovan, "The referendum and the transformation of the party system," *Modern Italy*, 1:1 (1995), 58-9. Gambetta and Warner go so far as to say that reform process was "under the control of the establishment," ironically the very group "against whom it was directed." While they correctly note that public participation in the details of the reform process was limited, they overstate the degree to which traditional elites 'controlled' the process. This has the effect of ignoring how much of the traditional elite coalitions had already broken down or were declining before the reform process emerged. See Diego Gambetta and Steve Warner, "Italy: Lofty Ambitions and Unintended Consequences," in Colomer (ed.), *Handbook of Electoral System Choice*, 239-40.

[91] Pasquino, "Reforming the Italian Constitution," 42-4; Fabbrini, "Has Italy rejected the referendum path to change?" 48-50, 54.

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political elites could no longer be sustained in contexts of European and American free trade. Without their payoffs and political direction, justices and many politicians became more 'independent.' As elites on both the right and left struggled to forge a new political identity and winning electoral formula, they deliberately - sometimes inadvertently - helped expose the deep corruption of the Italian political system, unleashing a strong public reaction against the status quo. Out of such tumult, political elites fought over voting system reforms as a means of securing both specific policy objectives (i.e. neo-liberal reforms) and a strengthened position strategically in coming electoral contests, with results that were uneven, unpredictable, and - for some - disastrous.

Japan

The voting system reform process in Japan differed markedly from that in New Zealand and Italy in at least one important way – the parties rather than a citizen-supported referendum process could be seen as driving the change. In 1994 the first non-Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP) government in 38 years replaced Japan's traditional semi-proportional voting system with a mixed-member system consisting of 300 single member plurality seats and another 200 seats elected from party lists. Voting system reform had long been a back-burner issue in Japanese politics, trotted out every few years by the reigning LDP to either discipline their rivals or appear to respond to seemingly endless corruption charges, but it always faced strong opposition from other parties and a majority within the LDP itself. Why did the status quo give way in 1994? Some analysts credited heightened public concern over corruption for fueling the reform, along with an emerging consensus amongst political commentators and elites that the country's persistent political problems - money politics, one-party dominance, factionalized parties

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- were the product of its traditional Single Nontransferable Vote System (SNTV).[92] But others pointed to a new instability in the party system itself, noting divisive struggles within all parties around key issues like economic development, market liberalization and foreign diplomacy.

Politicians and academic commentators have long focused on SNTV as a key determinant of Japan's party system, particularly in producing some its more negative traits, such as long periods of one-party rule, party factionalization and the never-ending quest for campaign finances.[93] The first concerted push to change the system came shortly after the return of governing control to the Japanese in the early 1950s.[94] Initially, the opposition Socialist party (JSP) lobbied for an Anglo-American single member plurality (SMP) system hoping to benefit from right-wing vote splits between the Liberal and Democratic parties. But when those right parties fused into a single governing party in 1955 and forged ahead with voting system reform, specifically an SMP system, the JSP balked and organized ferocious opposition, preferring instead a proportional system or the status quo. After heated wrangling the LDP let the matter drop, but not for long.[95] Electoral reform issues generally returned to the legislature in response to allegations of corruption. Between 1960 and 1972 seven advisory councils on electoral reform were

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[92] Rei Shiratori, "The Politics of Electoral Reform in Japan," *International Political Science Review*, 16:1 (1995), 92. SNTV is often referred to as a semi-proportional voting system because it is more open to multi-party competition than plurality or majority systems but much less accurate than PR systems. SNTV operates with multi-member ridings where voters are limited to a single non-transferable vote. The system rewards parties that can organize their voters effectively. If a party puts up too many candidates, they may see their votes spread too thinly across their candidates and not elect anyone. If they run too few, they may not not capture all the support they have in the constituency. In a sense, SNTV operates on the same principles as the Limited Vote, though in a more exaggerated way.

[93] J.A.A. Stockwin, "Japan," in Bogdanor and Butler (eds.), *Democracy and Elections: Electoral Systems and their Political Consequences*, 210.

[94] The debates amongst Japan's political class over the effects of SNTV stretch back to the early days of American occupation following WWII. However, except for some minor tinkering with the size the districts between 1946-7, the system survived countless efforts to change it over the following decades. See Masaru Kohno, *Japan's Postwar Party Politics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 39-47.

[95] S.R. Reed and M.F. Thies, "The Causes of Electoral Reform in Japan," in M. Shugart and M. Wattenberg (eds.), *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems*, 158-9.

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convened, six with an explicit focus on the voting system. But consensus was difficult to achieve: typically the LDP stuck by its proposals for SMP, while the opposition parties called for PR or adjustments to SNTV. In the end, most reports were simply filed away. Put simply, individual LDP legislators could see little point in changing a system that had worked so well for them.[96]

Interest in voting system reform re-emerged from all parties in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a series of high profile scandals toppled two LDP prime ministers and a host of high-ranking legislators. Opposition parties, reveling in the LDP loss of control in the now-PR elected upper house, supported change as a possible way of forcing the LDP from government. Meanwhile various factions within the LDP considered a focus on voting system reform an effective pre-emptive move that might stall more thorough-going reforms and allow the party to stay in power.[97] But the mixed system proposal that emerged from the Eighth Electoral Reform Commission in 1990 earned only criticism from the opposition and indifference from the LDP.[98] Finally, a new scandal in 1992 resurrected the discussion, and amid calls from the opposition for thorough-going campaign finance reforms the LDP introduced legislation for a full SMP system in 1993. At this point, the opposition broke with its traditional objections to mixed systems and proposed a fully proportional MMP system as an alternative. This shift in the opposition ranks would prove decisive. The subsequent debate on these proposals split the LDP, toppled the government, and led to the first non-LDP administration since 1955.

In the July 1993 lower house elections an historic non-LDP coalition government emerged, though it agreed on little but the need for voting system reform. The key division concerned economic policy, with many of the former LDP members supporting

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[96] Gerald D. Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics; Leaders, Institutions, and the Limits of Change*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 147-8.
[97] Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics*, 21, 139.
[98] Reed and Thies, "The Causes of Electoral Reform in Japan," 163-5.

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economic liberalization, while JSP members defended Japan's highly state-regulated system. As a result, the new coalition government made political reform its top priority, but even here it had difficulty carrying out its objectives. JSP members were divided over the proposed electoral reforms, and 17 eventually voted against the government bill when it reached the Upper House, causing it to fail.[99] Now the coalition leaders turned to the LDP to work out a compromise. LDP influence reduced the new system's proportionality and gutted provisions to reduce the impact of money on campaigns. After the new voting system was finally adopted in January 1994 the non-LDP coalition government slowly imploded, incapable of managing its policy contradictions.[100] Just five months later, the LDP was back in power and has remained there ever since, first in coalition with their longtime rivals, the JSP, and after their demise in the 1996 elections, with other parties. Though complaints about the new system abound, no serious effort has emerged to replace it.[101]

Analysis of Japan's 1994 voting system reform has focused heavily on the timely conjuncture of repeated scandal and corruption, with increasing public pressure for a political response, alongside an emerging consensus amongst the political class that the country's traditional single non-transferable voting system has been responsible for much of what ails the political system (e.g. excessive party factionalization, one-party rule, the corrupting influence of money on politicians and policy outcomes, etc). While these factors were undoubtedly influential, they fail to explain why voting system reform succeeded in the 1990s when it had failed so many times before. Scandal, promises of

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[99] Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics*, 159-60.
[100] Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics*, 116.
[101] Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics*, 168.

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reform, blaming the voting system; these decade-old factors had done little to challenge either the LDP or SNTV before.[102]

The key difference between the 1990s and previous eras of voting system reform was a markedly changed international environment, both politically and economically. As a front-line Cold War state, the bulwark of American foreign policy in the region, Japan's meteoric economic growth was greatly aided by technology transfers and privileged terms of trade with the US.[103] But the end of the Cold War brought new pressure from US politicians and business to 'open Japan for business' and alter the lopsided trade relationship. The restructuring of international trade along free market lines put enormous pressure on Japan to open markets and internationalize corporate ownership, decision-making and investment.[104] It also made Japan's clientelistic form of politics, where votes and campaign funds were essentially traded for extensive, often unnecessary, public works and government contracts, more politically risky, As Japan's competitive position in the world economy declined, and the economy stagnated at home, support for decentralization, deregulation and neo-liberal policies emerged within the LDP itself, despite the party's traditional reliance on a strong hand in economic affairs to pay back contributors and voters. At the same time, more and more voters and business leaders were questioning whether contemporary conditions required their traditional fidelity to the LDP.[105]

The end of the Cold War also showed up the irrelevance of an LDP hegemony based on the need to protect Japan from 'socialism.' In fact, by the late 1980s and 1990s, the JSP was one of the strongest defenders of Japan's distinctive brand of state-

[102] Kubota reports 42 political scandals between 1955-1993, at a rate of at least one major scandal per year; Akira Kubota, "A Genuine Reform? The June-August 1993 Upheaval in Japanese Politics," Asian Thought and Society, XVII:53-4 (May-December 1993), 112.

[103] William K. Tabb, The Postwar Japanese System, (New York: Oxford, 1995), 92.

[104] Particularly from the US; Curtis, The Logic of Japanese Politics, 199; see also Gregory W. Noble, "Japan in 1993: Humpty Dumpty Had a Great Fall," Asian Survey, XXXIV:1 (January 1994), 19-29.

[105] Curtis, The Logic of Japanese Politics, 21, 43, 52, 88.

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interventionist capitalism.[106] But the JSP were also facing internal pressures for change, fueled in part by a reorganization and centralization of the labour movement that helped fund the party.[107] This also reflected ideological differences within the party and the union movement, with the left committed to some degree of anti-capitalism, while the right sought a Blairite 'third way.' As a result, the left in the JSP, fearing a new voting system might break up the party, opposed voting system reform - and many of its legislators broke ranks to vote against it. Meanwhile, the right in the JSP thought a new voting system would weaken its left, thus aiding the development of a new government-oriented, centre-left party. Both sides were proven correct when the JSP was practically wiped out in the 1996 Lower House elections, the remnants joining the centrist Democratic party.[108] However, the increase in Communist Party support that coincided with the fall of the JSP suggests that the class cleavage, though weak, remains relevant.

Thus the heightened impact of otherwise ostensibly normal political conditions in Japan - money politics, corruption, complaints about the negative effects of the voting system - gained their saliency amid a process of sometimes subtle, sometimes not-so-subtle, party re-alignment. The perceived end of the '1955 system,' and the economic logic that had fueled LDP politics, was one reason that so many politicians were willing to take up voting system reform and pursue new political allegiances. The challenge to the postwar economic system also encouraged a re-alignment of forces within the JSP, leading to a break in their historic approach to institutional reform, arguably the catalyst for the subsequent events. According such importance to the left here may seem surprising, given the lopsided nature of LDP hegemony in Japanese politics, and the slow decline in JSP support from the 1960s. But as with Italy, the clientelistic nature of the

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[106] Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics*, 198.

[107] Raymond V. Christensen, "Electoral Reform in Japan: How It Was Enacted and Changes It May Bring," *Asian Survey*, XXXIV:7 (July 1994), 596; Eugene L. Wolfe, "Japanese Electoral and Political Reform: Role of the Young Turks," *Asian Survey*, XXXV:12 (December 1995), 1070-73.

[108] Reed and Thies, "The Causes of Electoral Reform in Japan," 171.

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political system was held in place by the character of the party system, specifically the existence of a main opposition party that appeared unelectable. The JSP had remained the key opposition party for a host of reasons, including its strong commitment to peace and anti-militarism. As changing economic and international factors only further weakened the JSP's competitive position electorally into the 1990s, their strategic responses and internal divisions broke the dualism that had long characterized the Japanese political system, creating an opening for institutional reform.

Given the obvious decline of the traditional party system in the 1990s, based on a left-right dualism shaped in and designed to serve the Cold War, elements within both the LDP and the JSP saw voting system reform as a means of breaking out of political arrangements that appeared less and less viable. Scandal was less important in fomenting reform than the changing international terms of trade that were weakening the LDP's traditional clientelistic forms of political control and the fact that Japan's business class were no longer united behind the postwar 'Japan Inc.' strategy of strong national tariffs and high exports. Support for neo-liberal restructuring of Japan's economy was increasingly dividing the traditional LDP ranks, leading to break-away political formations that ultimately cost the centre-right its control of the government in the 1990s. Meanwhile, Japan's left was also divided about the way forward, with the dominant force within the JSP in favour of reform as a means of refashioning the party as the logical pole of attraction for all those wanting a change in government. The JSP interpreted the increasing fragmentation within the LDP ranks as opportunity to move toward this goal and accepted an LDP proposal for voting system reform, with disastrous results. Voting system reform did not end LDP control of Japanese politic,s let alone aid the left, but it did give voice to neo-liberal political forces and move its traditional governing party closer to neo-liberal positions on a host of issues.

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United Kingdom

The last voting system reforms adopted in the 1990s occurred in Britain. But unlike its predecessors, the British reform process has been a more muted and limited affair, both in terms of the political circumstances surrounding it and the impact of the changes on the national political scene. Since 1997 and the return of Labour to the government benches, Britain has moved from a longstanding defence of single member plurality for every kind of election to a startling embrace of electoral system pluralism, adopting no less than five separate voting systems for different electoral purposes, all in less than five years. After gaining power, veteran political observers expected to see Labour give most of these proposals a 'kick into the long grass': endless rounds of study, committee hearings, expert counsel, etc. Instead, Labour took up action very shortly after assuming government in May 1997. Elections for a Northern Irish constitutional assembly were held later in May, the government announced a switch to PR for European elections in July, and referendums on establishing local assemblies for Scotland and Wales were held in September. Plans for the return of London's local government were also quickly pulled together, complete with directly elected mayor and council. All these new representative structures involved countless decisions about design, composition, decision rules and constitutional powers. Curiously, the voting systems for all contained some element of proportionality, a clear departure from British electoral traditions. Nationally, voting system reform was also under consideration. By December 1997 Labour struck an Independent Commission on the Electoral System, dubbed the 'Jenkins Commission' after its chair, Lord Jenkins. After less than a year in power, Labour's resolve to honour its pledge to hold a referendum on Britain's voting rules appeared firm.

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The rise of voting system reform in British circles was as surprising as it was meteoric. A decade earlier, the topic was the province of mostly-ignored constitutional reform groups like Charter 88, and the third-place Alliance (an electoral alliance of the Liberal and Social Democratic parties). This is not to say that Britain's traditional SMP voting system had not come under recent scrutiny and criticism. It had, but few expected decisive action from the parliamentary Labour Party. After all, in a 1977 free vote on whether to adopt a party list PR system for European elections, Labour leaders appeared indecisive and half the caucus joined with the Tories to vote it down.[109] Two decades later, most spent mired in opposition after four successive defeats at the polls, Labour still seemed lukewarm about change. In fact, new leader Tony Blair declared he was unconvinced of the merits of PR shortly before the 1997 campaign.[110] These were all facts that made his party's speedy adoption of a flurry of proportional and semi-proportional voting systems shortly after taking office all the more curious.

Though never dominating public discussion, voting system debates had been percolating through British public consciousness for at least two decades. The governing Conservatives brought the topic back to life in 1973 when they mandated the use of PR for elections in Northern Ireland as one response to emerging social and political tensions there.[111] However, the representational quirks of Britain's traditional first-past-the-post system really made headlines when the party with the most votes lost the February 1974 election. In that instance Labour triumphed over the Conservatives despite enjoying slightly less public support. In a way this just reversed a previous injustice; in 1951 it was Labour who suffered, losing to the Tories despite getting more votes. But the situation in the 1970s was complicated by a further injustice to the third place Liberals, a

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[109] David Farrell, "The United Kingdom Comes of Age: The British Electoral Reform 'Revolution' of the 1990s," in Shugart and Wattenberg (eds.), Mixed Member Electoral Systems, 525.

[110] Farrell, "The United Kingdom Comes of Age," 521.

[111] David Butler, "Electoral Reform and Political Strategy in Britain," in S. Noiret (ed.), Political Strategies and Electoral Reforms, 457.

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party whose negligible support in 1951 (3%) had mushroomed to 20% in the back-to-back elections of 1974. Yet the Liberals secured less than two percent of the seats in the House of Commons, fewer seats in fact than much less popular regional parties. These disturbing trends motivated a number of ruminations about electoral reform, including the highly-touted Hansard Commission Report of 1976 that called for a semi-proportional Additional Member System (AMS).[112]

The question of voting system reform remained within sight in the 1980s but well beyond political reach. When the new Social Democrat/Liberal Alliance gained 25% of the popular vote in the 1983 election (just 3% less than Labour) but only a handful of seats, another round of hand-wringing occurred, though little came of it.[113] The problem was simple: both Conservatives and Labour utterly opposed any change. Without support from either of the two major parties, the parties generally perceived to have a realistic chance of forming governments, the issue was a non-starter.[114]

The break came with the third straight defeat for Labour in 1987. At this point the 'Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform' started to gain ground within the party as both members and a few MPs began to worry that the pendulum might not ever swing back.[115] Whether to let off steam or hedge their bets in the event of another loss, Labour established a working group on electoral reform under Raymond Plant in 1990. The Plant Reports sketched out many of the innovative ideas Labour would later introduce in government, particularly as concerned sub-national reform and European elections. But

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[112] Pippa Norris, "The Politics of Electoral Reform in Britain," *International Political Science Review*, 16:1 (1995), 72-3.

[113] Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System, 1820-1945*, 284. For instance, the 1983 Campaign for Fair Votes, an eclectic group of Liberal and Conservative politicians, gathered over one million signatures calling for a referendum on PR, to no avail.

[114] Even hoping for a 'hung' parliament was far from a sure thing. The third place Liberals had supported a minority Labour administration twice in the past (1929-31; 1976-9) but failed to extract any concessions on voting system reform. See Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 244-5.

[115] Though LCER was formed in 1976. See Hart, *Proportional Representation: Critics of the British Electoral System*, 285-6.

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Plant's call for a new national voting system, the semi-proportional 'supplementary vote,' still proved too controversial for the party, despite Labour's fourth consecutive defeat in 1992. In the convention debate on the issue, Plant's proposal was voted down but supporters did manage to commit the party to a national referendum on the question.[116]

The Labour Party's shift on voting system reform has been explained in a number of ways. Some credit leader Tony Blair's stated desire to move Britain away from confrontation and toward a more consensual style of politics. Others point to it as a component of Labour's new commitment to broader constitutional reform, accountability and consultation.[117] And there have been suggestions that Labour may just be trying to 'wrong-foot' the Conservatives and keep them on the defensive, just as the Tories used to do to them.[118] Dunleavy and Margetts suggest the promise of voting system reform was extracted by the centre Liberal Democrats in return for Lib/lab cooperation with tactical voting in the constituencies to defeat the Tories in the general election.[119] Less attention has been paid to how Labour's position may reflect larger struggles and changes within the party itself. Today's Labour is hardly recognizable when compared to the party as it existed for most of the postwar period. Under Tony Blair the party has jettisoned much of its traditional policy program, weakened the influence of activists in the party, and

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[116] Norris, "The Politics of Electoral Reform in Britain," 74-5.

[117] For an illuminating discussion about Labour's motives in touting larger political and party reforms, see the debate amongst Mair, Marquand, McKibbon and Barnett in the 2000 issues of *New Left Review*. McKibbon's intervention is the strongest, highlighting some of the social and historical pressures forcing Labour to move on decentralization (i.e. Scotland, London) despite their discomfort with it, which is one reason the Labour leadership has fought so hard to limit what these new bodies can do (i.e. campaigning to limit Scottish taxing powers). McKibbon rightly connects all this with Labour's embrace of neo-liberalism and the decline of the party organization as a means of reaching voters (thus strengthening attempts by the leadership to control the party's image through the media). See Ross McKibbin, "New Labour: Treading Water?" *New Left Review*, 4 (July/Aug 2000), 69-74.

[118] Farrell, "The United Kingdom Comes of Age," 528.

[119] Dunleavy and Margetts, "From Majority to Pluralist Democracy," 301.

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strengthened the hand of the leader to act unilaterally.[120] Some claim to see a similar pattern at work in the Labour government's democratic reforms.

A good deal of Labour's motives can be seen in their shifting positions on Scottish and Welsh devolution. Historically Labour opposed it for the same reasons that left parties everywhere opposed federalism, bicameralism or a separation of powers - it might limit a central government's ability to act, particularly with regard to the economy. As long as Labour was committed to its traditional interventionist approach to government and the economy the party vigorously resisted devolution. The rise of the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) in the 1970s cut into Labour's support in the region, traditionally a stronghold for the party, forcing it to concede a referendum on the issue in 1979. Though a majority endorsed the idea, it failed for lack of turnout. Tight competition with the SNP forced Labour to pay close attention to Scottish affairs in the 1980s and 1990s. In a series of constitutional conventions starting in 1989, Labour endorsed devolution and eventually a proportional scheme to elect a Scottish Parliament.[121] At the same time, Labour was in the process of backing off its traditional policy commitments to interventionism and an expanded welfare state, distancing itself from the 'class politics' of 'old Labour.'[122] Thus Labour commitments to decentralization and 'democracy,' an apparent opening of the political system, must be balanced against its new commitments to neo-liberalism, which have the effect of dramatically narrowing what this expanded democratic space can talk about.

While reformers applauded what they saw as the good faith of the Labour government in keeping their promises about voting reform for European elections, the

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[120] Paul Webb and Justin Fisher, "The Changing British Party System: Two-Party Equilibrium or the Emergence of Moderate Pluralism?" in Broughton and Donovan (eds.), *Changing Party Systems in Western Europe*, 24-5; Panitch and Leys, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism*, particularly chapter 10.
[121] David Denver *et al*, *Scotland Decides: The Devolution Issue and the Scottish Referendum*, (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 33.
[122] Panitch and Leys, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism*, 237, 250-7.

new London council and devolution, critics charged that Blair's zeal for the job was all about settling scores within his own party. For instance, Labour MEPs complained that the leader deliberately introduced the party list form of PR for European elections to gain control over nominations and root out one of the final bastions of opposition to his remaking of the party.[123] Blair's later effort to rig Labour's nomination for the London Mayoralty against his leftish MP Ken Livingstone only appeared to confirm this assessment. Even the government's much-vaunted power-sharing approach to devolution was decidedly asymmetrical and reflected Labour's biases about proportional voting. A dose of PR for the regions meant they would be much more representative, but it could also mean they would be less decisive, less likely to challenge the dominance of Westminster.[124]

Labour's institutional reforms around devolution and more proportional voting systems developed out of countless consultations - Scotland's constitutional conventions, contributors to the Plant reports, interaction and negotiation with community groups and even other political parties. In the run-up to the 1997 general election, Labour was keen to build the broadest coalition behind its programme. The party went so far as to work publicly with the third-place Liberal Democrats in 1996, signing a number of pre-election agreements around democratic and constitutional reform.[125] But all this should not obscure where Labour's self-interest also dictated their commitment to reform. Labour's

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[123] In a move that seemed to confirm this view, few of the critics were re-nominated and two were even expelled from the party. See Andrew Reynolds, "Electoral System Reform in the United Kingdom," in H. Milner (ed.), *Making Every Vote Count*, 172-3.

[124] Blair's efforts to extend the central party's control over all aspects of party activity reflects his view that self-chosen activists at the local level are not often representative of typical Labour voters and letting them have too much influence only made the party unelectable in the past. Taking this up in a more critical way, there is some justification to the view that local branches of political parties do not have the kinds of links they once had with local communities precisely because of changes in member/party interactions outlined at the start of the chapter. See Colin Leys, "The British Labour Party's Transition from Socialism to Capitalism," in L. Panitch (ed.), *Are There Alternatives? Socialist Register 1996*, (London: Merlin Press, 1996), 10-14; Panitch and Leys, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism*, 3-5, and chapter 10, "Disempowering Activism: The Process of Modernization," 214-36.

[125] Reynolds, "Electoral System Reform in the United Kingdom," 173-4.

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choice of voting system for Scotland and Wales were both designed to favour Labour, as subsequent election results have borne out.[126] It might be countered that Labour's keen action on devolution and voting system reform reflected their commitment to values supporting local governance and inclusion, or represent in part a principled response to public and stakeholder demands, but such views should not obscure how these decisions also reflected a pragmatic calculation of how much these policies would help the party without interfering with its own source of power at Westminster. Thus Blair's efforts appear similar to Mitterrand's introduction of an element of PR to French municipalities and regions in the early 1980s – to more effectively 'divide and rule' other political jurisdictions. The fact that Labour has repeatedly stalled on electoral reform at the national level only lends further credence to this interpretation.

Few leaders legislate away their own power base. But Labour's rapid work on devolution and the reform of European voting convinced many pundits that the party just might be serious about applying reform to itself as well - elections to the House of Commons. Of course, as a party Labour did not endorse any specific change to the country's voting system. Instead, they committed themselves to a process where change could be considered, first through extensive research and consultation, and then via a national referendum on the question. For many in Labour, the promise was hardly threatening as they felt confident that tradition would win out over 'foreign' ways of doing things. Thus little opposition emerged when the Labour government appointed the Jenkins Commission in December 1997 to get the process started.

But before the Commission could submit its report, a host of political developments began to subtly undermine Labour's continued commitment to the process.

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[126] Peter Lynch, "Making Every Vote Count in Scotland: Devolution and Electoral Reform," in H. Milner (ed.), *Steps Toward Making Every Vote Count: Electoral Reform in Canada and its Provinces*, (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004), 145-58; Patrick Dunleavy and Helen Margetts, "The United Kingdom: Reforming the Westminster Model," in Colomer (ed.), *Handbook of Electoral System Choice*, 296-7.

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The initial results in Scotland under their semi-PR voting system witnessed a significant drop in Labour support from the national elections just one year earlier, forcing Labour there into a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats. This fueled opposition within Labour's parliamentary caucus and furthered the organization of an explicitly anti-PR group of MPs. Lord Jenkins' report did little to quell the growing opposition or inspire new support.

Submitted in October 1998, Jenkins recommended the mildly-proportional Supplementary Vote, rejecting both the German-style MMP and Britain's traditional choice of proportional voting, STV. Many cried foul, claiming Jenkins' cozy relations with the new PM had influenced his deliberations. Dunleavy and Margetts report that Jenkins had an interim meeting with Blair where the PM nixed his plan to promote a more proportional additional member voting system.[127] Though Jenkins later denied improper influence, his conclusions bore a striking resemblance to Labour's own maximal position.[128] This perhaps pragmatic accommodation to power did little to speed the process. Interest in a report so timid in its recommendations for change evaporated quickly. In the end, Labour broke its promise to hold a referendum on the question in its first term, though to keep Liberal Democrat support at election time they suggested it would be held in the future. Yet since then, a number of Labour MPs have publicly spoken against the idea, government ministers have floated non-proportional alternatives to Jenkins' proposals, and Blair has continued to make vague promises to restart the process but has refused to provide any specific details.[129]

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[127] Dunleavy and Margetts, "From Majority to Pluralist Democracy," 303.
[128] Farrell, "The United Kingdom Comes of Age," 537.
[129] "Hain Backs Reform of Vote System," *BBC News*, March 16, 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/politics/3517900.stm; Marie Woolf, "Government in Secret Talks with Liberal Democrats over Voting System Reform," *The Independent*, December 23, 2003; Dunleavy and Margetts, "From Majority to Pluralist Democracy," 304; Dunleavy and Margetts, "The United Kingdom: Reforming the Westminster Model," 298.

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The re-making of Britain's Labour party in the 1980s and 1990s involved a calculated effort to re-situate the party more closely to the perceived centre of British politics in the aftermath of the Thatcherite right-wing juggernaut. Tony Blair's New Labour gave up any pretence of class politics and instead embraced key elements of the new neo-liberal economic model. Yet before his election victory in 1997 Blair could not be sure whether his lunge for the centre would work, and as a back-up he attempted to form a broad anti-Conservative coalition to secure victory, even countenancing electoral cooperation with the third-place Liberal-Democrats. In this context of uncertainty about reshaping Britain's party system, Labour leaders and activists made a weak commitment to consider slightly proportional voting system reforms. Labour's victories in 1997 and 2001 effectively shelved voting system reform initiatives at the national level, despite some positive noises on the issue early in Labour's first term. However, for other electoral purposes - devolved regional government in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, local government in London, and for European elections - Labour's leadership has turned to voting system reform as a means of dividing their political opponents in the party system and marginalizing opponents of New Labour's neo-liberal project within the party as well.

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Conclusion

Voting system reform burst on to the political agendas of a number of established democracies in the 1990s, fueled by voter dissatisfaction with conventional politics and a larger process of party system change. Yet in each case, the confluence of events had a slightly different trajectory. In New Zealand, citizens pushed voting system reform as a response to their frustration with the Labour party and its attempts to reposition the party on the political spectrum. In doing so, they faced opposition from both major parties. The public was also a force in Italy too, though here there were more traditional political forces also interested in change, particularly the former communists in the new social democratic party. In Japan voters were also fed up with politics as usual, though they expressed little interest in voting system reform. Here the parties championed a new voting system as a means of remaking their political coalitions and repositioning themselves in the party system - voter concerns simply formed a convenient backdrop. And in Britain, voting system reform emerged as part of Labour's campaign to return to government and shift the party toward the centre. As it turned out, Labour did not need a new voting system to reform themselves, though the introduction of PR and semi-PR systems for European elections and at the sub-national level did serve the leadership's interest in dividing other levels of government and extending central party control over all aspects of the party. In all cases, the impinging changes in international political economy, with support both within and outside the nation-state, put pressure on traditional political coalitions and conventional approaches to economic regulation. In each country, the decisions of left parties and the nature of the support or opposition they

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faced, would prove a key factor in how voting system reform emerged, or whether it emerged at all.

In examining successful voting system reform in a number of countries, reform emerged as left parties tried to redefine themselves and their place in the party system. Earlier public discussions on the subject in Ireland, the Netherlands, and Canada - where the left was not factor - stalled. France was the turning point. Faced with declining party capacities, a weak partner on the left, and national and international pressures to abandon the postwar economic compromise, the Socialists moved to the right and turned to PR to shift the party system in their favour. Though PR did not last, the shift in the French party system did occur, setting an example for how institutions could serve as renewed sites of struggle in securing other political and economic ends.

French political struggles involving party and class in the late 1980s were not unique. By the 1990s all western countries witnessed an intensification of neo-liberal pressure and a decline of left parties (if not support). In New Zealand, Italy, Japan and the UK, this also manifest in institutional struggles and reform, though in different ways. In New Zealand support for voting system reform emerged primarily out of struggles within the Labour party over their government's neo-liberal economic policies. As activists lost the battle within the party, reform became an attractive strategy to discipline the party, and open up new avenues of resistance to neo-liberalism (through the election of new parties). In Italy, increasing European economic integration highlighted the unsustainability of the country's clientelist politics and economy. Though sustained by the DC and an opportunistic PSI, business and regional unrest cut into their traditional voter base. When the PCI reinvented itself as the social democratic PDS, it precipitated a split with their more orthodox left wing, and eased its move to the centre. Subsequently the party decided to reassess its strategies and reversed its longstanding support of PR,

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thus opening a space for electoral reform. But when it pursued neo-liberal policies in government, both the right and far left fought to stem the process of electoral reform (the right because they wanted to occupy that policy space, and the far left because they opposed it). In Japan the influence of the left was arguably the weakest, given the strength of the LDP hold on power. Still, the pressures of a changing international economy altered the incentives for both LDP and opposition parties, leading to consensus on voting system reform after decades of intransigent debate. The decision of the left-led opposition to compromise arguably started the process. In Britain, voting system reform emerged as part of Labour's broad coalition strategy to get back into power after an 18 year absence, and to aid Tony Blair in his struggle to remake the party and marginalize his left critics.

Across all three countries a number of factors coincided, contributing to voting system reform, including a changing international political economy that required some local response, a change in the relationship of left voters and their parties, changes to the national and international media systems accentuating election campaign style over substance, and changes within left parties strengthening leadership groups at the expense of members and activists. How those factors aided electoral reform depended on the particular development of the party system in each country, and the nature of past institutional manifestations of party struggle. The role of left parties, more than others, has been highlighted because historically the left's statist aspirations fueled previous democratization efforts. In the early twentieth century, and again after WWII, the left mobilized a sizeable working class constituency and aroused powerful opposition, often leading to struggles for proportional voting where government was within their grasp. But the recent breakdown of the postwar regime of international trade, along with the increasing estrangement of left parties from their core support, has led to struggles to

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reorient the left away from their traditional state approach and policy goals. These struggles created an opening for the reconsideration of voting systems, either to fight the neo-liberalization of the left, as in New Zealand, or help entrench it, as in France, Italy, Japan and Britain.

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Chapter Eight: Conclusion

It had long been considered a truism of modern political science that voting systems in western industrialized countries were nearly impossible to change, barring some severe political crisis. In fact, true to this conservative bias, a host of political scientists had predicted that the latest round of reforms in the 1990s would not succeed - just before they did.[1] Just as the changes in Eastern Europe, Germany and South Africa had evaded the predictive capacities of contemporary political scientists, so too did the latest round of voting system reform catch the profession unaware, and scrambling for some means to explain it. As Pippa Norris candidly admitted on behalf of the discipline shortly after the first wave of reform in the early 1990s, "We lack a theoretical framework to understand how political systems reform basic constitutional principles."[2] Needless to say, the work that has emerged since then has focused mostly on recent events, with little attempt to fashion a comparative explanation across space, let alone historical time.

This dissertation set out to discover what commonalities existed, if any, across the range of cases of voting system reform in western industrialized countries over the last century. Previous scholarship and the striking cross-national trends in voting system reform in a number of different historical periods both suggested that something common was at work. Quantitative studies matched the incidence of multi-party politics and the rise of left parties specifically with voting system reform but struggled to say just why or how they were related. Given their inattention to historical contexts, they could only speculate about the causal relationships. Other scholars who did attend more to the

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[1] Arend Lijphart, "The Demise of the Last Westminster System: Comments on the Report of New Zealand's Royal Commission on the Electoral System," *Electoral Studies*, 6:2 (1987), 97-103; Jonathon Boston, "Electoral Reform In New Zealand: The Report of the Royal Commission," *Electoral Studies*, 6:2 (1987), 105-114.
[2] Norris, "Introduction: The Politics of Electoral Reform," 4.

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specific contexts of voting system reform did so in a way that ignored the sequence of historical events, either offering a summary of all the protagonists calling for reform (suggesting that reform came to satisfy their demands) or reading a causal account back from what appeared to be its later effects (the fact that PR better represented minority opinion meant that PR must have been introduced to accomplish this). Given the paucity of historical and comparative work on voting system reform specifically, most of these observations had remained untested.

By contrast, this study has focused on the importance of context in explaining change, working up an over-arching explanation through a close examination of all the cases of serious voting system reform efforts in western industrialized countries. This has involved taking insights from past work - the influence of multi-partism, left parties, democratization - and connecting them to the larger historical contexts within which these actors and processes were embedded. This was accomplished by paying closer attention to the historical fluidity of terms like 'democracy' and 'the left' and incorporating an historical approach to understanding the economy and economic change. Ralph Miliband's notion of 'capitalist democracy'- the idea that the parameters of democracy in western societies have been decisively shaped by the inequalities and antagonistic relations produced by capitalism - formed the basis of the conceptual framework guiding the work, buttressed by attention to the influence of international events (like war) and periodic struggles over the mode of state regulation of capitalism. As a result, the study has focused on struggles to politicize economic and social cleavages, how this informed and affected the party system, and spawned responses from other political forces. Specifically it has attended to the emergence of a working class cleavage, and its subsequent manifestation as a political cleavage in socialist and labour parties. Past work had suggested that left parties were key to reform. This study sought to explain why this

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was so, focusing particularly on the perceived threat left parties posed to the political system, and how this influenced institutional reforms like a change in voting system. It was suggested that voting system reform may have been a response to class struggles, that the reforms represented a 'condensation of class forces' in the institutions of the state.

The results of this study confirm that there is something common to all efforts at voting system reform in western countries, at least from the 1890s on, and that is the decisive influence of class factors, specifically the role of left parties amid the rise and decline of electoral class cleavages. Miliband's understanding of 'capitalist democracy' is supported by the cases examined here, as reforms have emerged in the context of historical struggles to either limit or expand the popular democratic character of the system, with effects that would either help or hinder capital. In each of the historical periods, from the late nineteenth century, to WWI, to the Cold War, to the 1990s, class struggles - struggles to make and unmake political cleavages and alter the national/international regulation of capitalism - have acted as spur to voting system reform. But this is too broad a claim, almost as broad as previous explanations that attributed change in voting systems to multi-partism or left parties. That is why attention has been paid here to the historical sequence of events, to allow an explanation of just *how* class factors have influenced this process. In different historical periods and in different places within any given period, class influences on struggles over voting system reform have been mediated by variations in class structure, political development, and the impact of international events.

This attention to the specific contexts of reform initiatives and the sequence of historical events has challenged many conventional assertions of past work on the subject. Commentators on nineteenth century voting system reforms focused on the

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importance of demands for minority representation and the key interventions of a voting system reform associations and intellectuals. But attention to the historical details of the various efforts provides scant evidence for such views. The commonly forwarded cases of minority representation voting system reforms in the mid-to-late nineteenth century - Denmark, the United States, Britain and Canada - have been shown to be just the opposite, cases where the majority sought to further its advantage against the minority. Reform associations and intellectuals were marginal in cases of actual voting system reform in the period or wholly ineffective in their lobbying for change. Braunias and Rokkan's characterization of the nineteenth century as the 'minority representation' phase of voting system reform cannot be sustained – nowhere in western countries did minority concerns fuel a change of voting system at the national level in the nineteenth century (or thereafter), and even changes at the cantonal level in Switzerland, allegedly to address minority concerns, are poorly documented. Instead, voting system reform emerges as a serious issue in this period only under the pressure of class factors, specifically the twin impact of the emergence of a new working class cleavage and its manifestation politically in unions and left political parties. Though religious and ethnic minorities long called for voting system reforms to accommodate them in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, they got little response until left parties began organizing working people politically in the 1890s. This is clear from the only case of successful national voting system reform in the nineteenth century, Belgium in 1899, and with conservative responses to the left in Germany and Sweden in the same period.

Over the last century, then, voting system reform in western industrialized countries has borne the distinct imprint of class struggles, operating within a context best understood using Miliband's concept of capitalist democracy. In nearly all our cases, stretching from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, from New

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Zealand to the heart of Europe, behind the struggles to change the voting system were struggles to alter the balance of class power affecting the state. In every period under study and in all the countries sponsoring a national change, the point was to shift the terrain of struggle from direct political conflict to a 'condensation' of class forces in the representative institutions of the state. Left political parties, whether on the rise or in decline, were always the key actors fuelling the consideration of change. On occasion other factors – like concern for the political inclusion of religious and ethnic minorities, or a desire for single-party governing majorities or alternation in government – have been raised but they have never secured a voting system reform on their own. Close attention to the historical sequence of the events leading to successful voting system reforms clearly demonstrates that these concerns have required the added stimulus of class struggle to force through any change.

The findings of the case studies explored in previous chapters suggest that class has defined the process of voting system reform over our different historical periods primarily because of the tensions inherent in first establishing and then maintaining the specifically capitalist form of democracy that emerged in western countries. This tension was primarily fuelled by the rise of left political parties throughout western countries in the late nineteenth century. Left parties championed democracy as a means of turning the state toward the economic and social concerns of the working class, and their distinctive form of organization allowed them to mobilize mass levels of support. Throughout the twentieth century the left's expansive 'democratic imaginary' inspired mass support and strong opposition from bourgeois forces and traditional political elites. Voting system reforms emerged again and again as one means of responding to the political machinations of the left.

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Voting system reform *specifically* became central to the management of capitalist democracy in a host of cases because voting rules essentially establish the aperture of the political system (under conditions of full suffrage and responsible government), regulating how open or closed political competition will be. Where the left appeared strong and set to take power, PR was attractive to conventional political elites as mean of limiting the burgeoning left-wing levels of support and maximizing their own. Essentially the right sought assurances that if the left were to wield majority power, they would require a real majority of popular support, unlike the inflated majorities the right had long enjoyed under plurality and majority voting systems. But these responses to the left were not consistent across all jurisdictions. Though Anglo-American countries seriously considered voting system reforms, particularly after WWI, their political elites tended to be more experienced with mass political processes affecting government than their counterparts in Europe, and more confident about being able to contain them without changing voting procedures. At the same time, the Anglo-American left was defined more in terms of 'political labour' than socialism, and as such appeared to pose less of threat than the more explicitly socialist parties of Europe (and it appeared electorally weaker; where it was strong – Australia – it did inspire modest voting system reforms). Even within Europe, the left's challenge was not consistent. Important differences in class structures, for instance, contributed to the institutional weakness of the French left and the limited and temporary nature of their voting system reforms in a number of periods.

We can make similar observations in comparing the left's influence across the four key periods of reform, highlighting the reciprocal influences between the left and its opponents, how changing material conditions have influenced the capacity of the left, and how international events like war and revolution have had a great impact on reform

results. In the late nineteenth century the left proved too weak in most cases to secure full male suffrage, let alone anything that might properly be called democracy, though conservative regimes struck upon PR as means of dividing their opponents and avoiding both parliamentarization and democracy, and many did take up reform in the early years of the twentieth century. In the period around WWI concerns about the rising power of the left and the uncertain conditions of war motivated a shift to PR in a few neutral countries in Europe. After WWI, faced with the influence of the Russian Revolution and domestic social upheaval, a form of minimally democratic rule was established most everywhere in western countries, with PR as the price of liberal and conservative acquiescence, at least in Europe. Similar conditions held PR in place in much of Europe following WWII, though in the continent's three biggest countries debate over voting systems would be influenced by the strength of Communist parties, the proximity of the Soviet Union, and eventually the pressures of the Cold War.

But by the 1990s the 'threat' of the left to capitalist democracies had largely evaporated. Now voting system reform emerged as a result of the weakness of the left, as a response by left parties to help fix a new centrist position for themselves in the political spectrum, or as means by which social forces could attempt to hold left parties to their historic cleavages or push polities toward a more full embrace of neo-liberalism. Over the course of the twentieth century the organizational methods of left mass parties were eventually mimicked by the right, while other capitalist activity eventually mobilized working people away from left networks of support, either through consumerism, urban sprawl, or the state sponsorship of formerly left party-provided social services. Though the class cleavage has remained salient, class as a political cleavage had lost much of its power by the 1990s. This is one reason that the latest wave of reform is so different. Here the left itself has tried to manipulate the voting rules to sustain itself, often by

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distancing itself from its own political coalition. Or left supporters have tried to use voting system reform as a means of anchoring left parties to their traditional constituencies. Or the right has attempted to change voting systems to break up the party system coalitions hindering their radical transformation of the mode of economic regulation, thus seeking by institutional change an opening to force through neo-liberal reforms, an example of a reversal of the class 'threat.'

In all this, the historical dimension of the conclusions must be underlined. Voting system reform has been linked to class struggles historically because the last century has been defined by the struggle over democracy, the management of the tension between its capitalist context and democratic pretensions. That has relied on a class threat from the left to hold any tension. But prior to the rise of an organized left, voting system reforms emerged as a means to political advantage by traditional competing elites (as in Denmark, Britain, the United States and Canada in the mid-to-late nineteenth century), or where the left remained weak voting system reforms proved attractive to colonial powers as a method to divide and rule (as in the British and French empires from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries). With the near collapse of the left as an electoral, mobilizing or counter-hegemonic threat today, the conditions that fueled consideration of new voting systems in the twentieth century in western industrialized countries may not hold. As voter turnouts plummet in western countries and election campaigns appear more and more defined by those who finance them, existing mostly in a virtual rather than physical space, the critical tension in capitalist democracies may be decisively shifting.[3] Voting system reform processes continue to unfold around the world in the twenty-first century but whether the dynamic sketched out here will continue to fuel them can only be

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[3] For one exploration of such a future, see Colin Crouch, *Post-Democracy*, (London: Polity Press, 2004).

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ascertained by bringing these historical and comparative insights into dialogue with a context-specific exploration of these new conditions and possibly new dynamics.

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Appendix One: Voting Systems Terms and Explanations

How Voting Systems Work

The voting system is the distinct subset of election rules that concern how votes will be translated into representation. Voting rules determine if votes are counted in local constituencies or totaled across the country as a whole, what kind of marking must be made on the ballot, and how winners are established. All voting systems consist of three components: voting formula, district size and ballot structure.

Voting formula refers to how votes are added up to determine winners. With a plurality formula, the candidate with the most votes wins, regardless of what proportion of the overall vote she has. With just two candidates, a majority is likely, but with three or four competitive candidates a winner could have just 34% or 26% of the vote and win. A majority formula seeks to correct for this by insisting that a winner gain 50%+1 for election. PR formulas broadly convert votes into seats so that the proportions of seats awarded roughly mirror the proportions of the votes cast.

Each formula is applied to votes within a geographical area or district, which can vary in size from a single to multi-member constituencies. Thus plurality can be combined with single member districts, as for British House of Commons, or multimember districts, as for Australian Senate elections before 1918.

Ballot structure refers to the manner in which voters mark their preferences on the ballot - nominal or ordinal. A nominal ballot involves one choice - usually an 'X' - for an individual candidate and/or party, or a number of choices of equal voting weight in multimember contests. An ordinal ballot allows voters to rank candidates by number – 1,2,3 - from their most to least preferred.

When these three elements are combined in different ways, they create specific voting systems. While there is considerable academic debate about the appropriate way to classify voting systems, for our purposes it makes sense to organize a voting system typology in terms of the results they produce. This is, in fact, how reformers, politicians and citizens have generally sorted them out historically.

With this results-oriented voting system typology, there are then three broad types: plurality, majority and proportional, with another hybrid group comprising semi-proportional systems.

The Voting Systems

Plurality voting systems are a 'winner take all' approach that, as mentioned above, can be combined with either single or multimember constituencies - both are plurality systems. Single member plurality, also known as 'first-past-the-post' or the 'relative majority system,' is used for most Canadian and American elections. Multimember plurality is usually referred to as bloc voting or 'at large' and remains in use municipally in a few North American locales.

Majority voting systems can be organized like the French Double Ballot or Second Ballot, where votes are cast in two rounds (one to narrow the field and the second to elect someone), or by using a transferable ballot, where voters number their choices (low vote-getters are eliminated and ballots redistributed until someone has a majority). The latter system, also known as the Alternative Vote, is used for lower house elections in Australia.

Proportional voting systems come in all kinds of combinations, based primarily on single or multimember ridings, with either transferable or non-transferable balloting, but essentially break down into three main forms: party list, Single Transferable Vote (STV), and mixed-member proportional (MMP). Party list has multi-member ridings, nominal voting (voters choose a list *in toto*, though sometimes they can alter the candidate order), and a proportional formula (there are different formulas that tweak the level of proportionality). Party list is used in many European countries, particularly in Scandinavia. STV also uses multi-member ridings and a proportional formula but utilizes transferable balloting to determine which individual candidates will be elected. STV has been used in Ireland, for the upper house elections in Australia, and for some provincial and municipal contests in Canada from about 1920 to 1960. MMP combines single member plurality elections with top-ups from party lists to create an overall proportional result. Some call MMP a 'mixed' electoral system rather than a proportional one, but as the results are usually proportional it makes sense to consider it a form of PR. It is used in Germany and New Zealand.

Semi-proportional voting systems do not fall neatly into any of the above categories. The limited vote, single non-transferable vote, and cumulative vote are basically variations of multi-member plurality voting, while a new category of 'mixed' systems combine single member plurality voting with proportional party lists, though the overall results are not proportional. The latter systems have recently become popular with electoral engineers in Japan, Russia and Mexico. Semi-proportional systems get

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their name because they usually assure a degree of minority representation but fall well short of proportional representation.

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