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Abstract: The United Kingdom (UK) is well known for the single-member plurality (SMP) or, more colloquially, the first-past-the-post, electoral system. Devolution of power in the late twentieth century, however, introduced new bodies and positions with new electoral systems, with the total reaching six. These consisted of three majoritarian systems – SMP, block vote, and supplementary vote – as well as three proportional systems – single transferable vote, mixed-member proportional representation, and regional list proportional representation. Sample election results are presented and examined. Despite the presence of several different electoral systems and party systems in the UK with the development of multilevel governance, SMP appears to be entrenched at Westminster, just as SMP systems abroad have, in most cases, also resisted change.

Keywords: block vote; mixed-member proportional; proportional representation; single-member plurality; single transferable vote; supplementary vote; United Kingdom

Introduction: Continuity and change

The United Kingdom (UK) is well known for what many political scientists call the single-member plurality (SMP) electoral system[1]. More commonly, if colloquially, known as 'first-past-the-post' – a racing reference that highlights the winner-take-all nature of this majoritarian system – SMP is used to elect the House of Commons, the lower house of Parliament. This system is used in many other countries, typically as a result of having some experience with British colonialism, and SMP has been the subject of controversy in a number of the countries using it, not least the UK itself, where the system has been the subject of intense criticism and even a referendum.

While SMP is strongly identified with its use in the UK, several other electoral systems have also been used for other bodies or positions in the UK, thanks to the process of decentralization (called 'devolution') in the late 1990s. As a result of the transfer of power from Westminster to the constituent nations outside England (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), as well as to local and regional authorities within England, there were six different electoral systems operating in different parts of the UK by the year 2000. This chapter will examine all of these systems, not simply SMP, whose historical developments from medieval times through the twentieth century have been explored in detail elsewhere (Bogdanor 1981; Carstairs 1980; Farrell 2011; Hart 1992; Mitchell 2005; Norris 1995). The main observation is that despite the presence of a multitude of different electoral systems and party systems in the UK since the expansion of multilevel governance, SMP has persisted at Westminster, seemingly entrenched and immune to contagion from the other electoral systems in use in the UK.

Three of the UK's electoral systems in the early twenty-first century were majoritarian: SMP; its predecessor, the block vote (BV, or multiple non-transferable vote), used for council elections in some English and Welsh local authority areas; and the more

modern supplementary vote (SV, or contingent vote), used to elect the mayors of some English cities, as well as Police and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales. The other three electoral systems were forms of proportional representation (PR): the single transferable vote (STV), used for most elections in Northern Ireland as well as for local elections in Scotland; regional list PR for the election of Great Britain's Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) when the UK was part of the European Union (EU); and the mixed-member proportional (MMP) system (usually called the 'additional member system' in the UK), used to elect the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, and the London Assembly.

This institutional diversity at the regional level has not led to electoral system change at Westminster, where a multiparty system has persisted despite the use of an electoral system better suited to a two-party system. While some observers, like Patrick Dunleavy, have correctly pointed out that the UK has made a transition from two-party politics to multiparty politics, with multiple party *systems* existing at the various levels of governance since devolution, the expectation that 'some form of transition of representation at Westminster seems inevitable as existing multi-party politics develops further' (Dunleavy 2005: 505) had not been realised by the second decade of the twenty-first century. As international comparisons show, multiparty systems and SMP can co-exist, even at the electoral district level, in defiance of Duverger's 'Law' (Duverger 1954): Canada (Gaines 1999) and India (Diwaker 2007) feature prominently as examples of countries with SMP systems resistant to reform. The case of the UK under multilevel governance reinforces this observation. Rather than a situation in which electoral rules at the various levels of governance in multilevel systems are the same or significantly influence one another, it appears that in the case of the UK, each level of governance constitutes its own political system, with only occasional influence on the other levels.

This chapter will explore the development of the six UK electoral systems, looking at the two waves of electoral reform attempts and their achievements. Examples of recent elections under the various systems will be provided to illustrate how these systems work in practice, as well as how proportional they are and what kind of party systems are associated with them. Issues and controversies associated with these systems will also be examined, including the importance of the constituency role of elected representatives in the UK. The story of the UK's electoral systems, it will be shown, is one of continuity and change.

Waves of electoral reform

There were two waves of electoral reform attempts in British history (Norris 1995: 69). The first wave took place in the late nineteenth century, at the time British politics began to democratize. As demands for greater inclusion grew, the political parties gradually extended the franchise to more and more citizens, raising questions about how this process would affect the parties' fortunes. Contrary to popular belief, most constituencies (electoral districts) returned two members by the plurality method – BV, in which the winners were the two candidates with the most votes in contests where each voter had two votes – to the House of Commons throughout most of its existence (Hart 1992: 5). Therefore, the SMP system is actually an electoral innovation away from BV and not an 'ancient' feature of British political history, or at least not of English political history – Ireland, Scotland, and Wales did have, for the most part, single-member constituencies, but these constituted a small portion of seats in the House of Commons (Carstairs 1980: 191).

The shift to a single-member constituency norm came as the two major parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, competed over the extension of the franchise and the redrawing of constituency boundaries at a time of great social and economic change in the UK. Part of the rationale for single-member constituencies was the protection of minorities,

especially the privileged minority that feared being swamped by the enfranchisement of more and more working-class men (Norris 1995: 69). With the 1867 Reform Act, there was a brief experiment in minority protection with the semi-proportional 'limited vote' system in which voters had one vote less than the number of members to be elected in a small number of three- and four-member constituencies (Carstairs 1980: 192), but these were seen as failing to protect minorities and abolished with the introduction of a primarily single-member constituency system in the 1885 Redistribution of Seats Act, with Prime Minister William Gladstone indicating that he was satisfied that minorities would be protected by the new system that would accompany the previous year's franchise extension (Hart 1992: 113-114). Eventually the Liberals came to support STV, but this shift came too late as they went into decline as the Labour Party rose and ultimately replaced them as a major party. Both the Conservatives and Labour came to support SMP.

The UK did, therefore, undertake electoral reform in the late nineteenth century, shifting from a mainly BV system to a mainly SMP system, with a brief experiment with the limited vote system. Unlike most other European countries, however, the UK did not move to PR, though it was proposed during this era. John Stuart Mill and Thomas Hare advocated STV, a preferential system in which voters would rank candidates numerically, rather than a party list system, which came to predominate across the rest of Europe. STV failed to impress most of the political class, which saw the system as an overly complicated product of naïve, idealistic reformers who looked down on party politicians to such an extent that their system was designed to enhance the chances of independent candidates and allow voters to choose between candidates of the same party, something most party leaders would like to avoid (Hart 1992: 267-268). While STV's advocates were ultimately unsuccessful in the UK, they did help to lay the foundations of this system in Ireland. The president of Britain's Proportional Representation Society (now the Electoral Reform Society) recommended STV as a way to

reassure the Protestant minority in the event of Home Rule when he visited in 1911, and this recommendation made its way into the 1922 constitution of the Irish Free State without controversy (Carstairs 1980: 203).

A second wave of attempts to reform the British electoral system began in the 1970s as the character of the British party system became more pluralistic, which was particularly apparent with the results of the two general elections of 1974. The two-party system of the mid-twentieth century was giving way to one in which the Liberals were gaining support after their replacement by a rising Labour Party in the earlier part of the century, and where Scottish and Welsh nationalists were competing more successfully in the 'Celtic Fringe'. The deteriorating political situation in Northern Ireland, whose SMP-elected parliament had been suspended by Westminster, led to the introduction of STV for local council and European Parliament elections in an effort to reassure the minority community that it was going to be represented more equitably (Farrell 2011: 29). Discussions about the possibility of devolution for Scotland and Wales in the 1970s also facilitated interest in alternate electoral systems, but PR was opposed by the Conservatives and most in the Labour Party, though the latter party did show some interest in PR and even more interest in the majoritarian alternative vote (AV) system, which requires voters to rank candidates preferentially in single-member constituencies. The Liberals and their successor party, the Liberal Democrats, supported STV, which has also been the preference of the Scottish National Party (SNP) and Plaid Cymru, the Party of Wales.

Nevertheless, the two major parties would normally benefit the most from SMP, gaining seats as an increasing number of voters supported minor parties that failed to win seats. In the 1950s and 1960s, Conservative and Labour candidates won around 90 per cent of the vote at general elections, but this dropped to about 75 per cent in the 1970s and the following two decades, and hit 65 per cent at the 2010 election, yet the two major parties still

managed to win about 90 per cent of the seats in the House of Commons (Clark 2012: 9-10). Labour's long spell in the political wilderness during Conservatives' 18 continuous years in power (1979-1997) did lead to some questioning of the electoral system, with the party's Working Group on Electoral Systems, chaired by political philosophy professor Raymond Plant, recommending the majoritarian SV for the House of Commons, MMP for the Scottish Parliament, and regional list PR for elections to the European Parliament and a reformed House of Lords in its 1993 report (Plant 1995).

The Labour victory under Tony Blair in 1997 brought an end to Conservative rule for 13 years and prompted a major increase in the number of electoral systems in the UK, which would double from three to six, with serious consideration given to changing the system used to elect the House of Commons. Roy Jenkins was charged with leading a commission that would investigate alternatives to SMP and make a recommendation that Labour's 1997 manifesto said would be put to the voters in a referendum. Jenkins recommended what he called 'AV Top-up', a largely AV-based system with a small compensatory tier of party list seats (15 to 20 per cent of the total) to be allocated in small electoral regions, meaning that while the system would technically have been a form of MMP, its compensatory ability would have been so limited that it might have been better described as a diluted majoritarian system (Lundberg 2007a: 479). Ultimately the system was never put to a referendum.

Electoral reform came back onto the agenda after the 2010 election when the Conservatives formed a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats, a party that had advocated STV for decades. The Conservatives agreed to a referendum on the electoral system for the House of Commons, but the voters would be offered the non-proportional AV as the alternative, rather than STV or some other PR option. Labour had promised a referendum on AV in its manifesto, so the system was on the table, with the Liberal Democrats probably calculating that despite its majoritarian nature, AV was potentially better

for the party than SMP, provided that a lot of second preferences could be won from the supporters of other parties (Curtice 2013: 217). Though the Conservatives agreed to the referendum and were presumably not worried about the potential impact of AV, they campaigned against change and seemed to reap the benefits of their own popularity while that of their smaller partner declined; ultimately, nearly 68 per cent of those who voted (on the low turnout of less than 42 per cent) opposed AV (Curtice 2013: 220).

The six UK electoral systems in use in the early twenty-first century

Despite the failure of the AV referendum, the UK was using six different electoral systems in the early twenty-first century (Table 1). One – the regional list PR system used to elect Great Britain's MEPs – would be eliminated as the UK left the EU and its MEPs left the European Parliament. The remaining five would include three examples of the majoritarian family of electoral systems and two from the proportional family, though residents of England outside London would not use any form of PR voting once the UK left the EU.

The following sections will describe the systems, noting their origins and providing examples of results with analysis, which will include voter turnout (which is calculated by the UK Electoral Commission as a proportion of the total electorate, not the voting age population), the number and percentage of women elected, the effective number of parliamentary parties calculated by the author according to Laakso and Taagepera (1979), and the Gallagher (1991) Least Squares index of disproportionality (the higher the number, the greater the disproportionality when translating votes into seats), calculated by the author using data from all parties (and candidates in the London Mayor election) winning at least one per cent of the vote or one seat, with independent (non-party) candidates not counted. In STV elections, the index of disproportionality calculation uses first preference votes as the basis of

party preference, while the same determination is made using the party vote in MMP elections, according to Lijphart (2012: 145).

Table 1 about here

Single-member plurality

SMP for House of Commons elections accompanied mass enfranchisement in the late nineteenth century, as described above. The system has also been used for local council elections in England and Wales and was used for the House of Commons of the Parliament of Northern Ireland after it switched from STV in the late 1920s until it was suspended and then abolished by Westminster in the early 1970s. Scotland's local councils were elected by SMP until 2007, when the Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition government in Scotland introduced STV.

When comparing votes and seats on a partisan basis, SMP election results often display high levels of disproportionality, particularly in multiparty systems. This is the case in the two House of Commons election results displayed in Table 2, where the 2010 result (Table 2A) reveals a Gallagher disproportionality index of 14.9, with 15.0 for 2015 (Table 2B). The effective number of parliamentary parties is 2.6 in 2010 and 2.5 in 2015. A crucial difference between the two election outcomes is the 'hung parliament' in 2010 – the rare event at Westminster since the Second World War in which no party wins a majority of seats, leading to the first coalition government since that war. The Conservatives came close to a majority of seats on 36 per cent of the vote, but rather than forming a minority government, they went into a formal coalition with the centrist Liberal Democrats. The Conservatives managed to win a small majority (on just under 37 per cent of the vote) in 2015 after a big drop in support for their coalition partner. While Labour's support actually rose more than one percentage point, its seat share dropped four points.

Results in Table 2 show how the two major parties benefit from SMP, winning a far larger share of seats than their vote share, while the medium-sized Liberal Democrats in 2010 manage to win less than nine per cent of the seats on their 23 per cent of the vote (Table 2A). Smaller parties typically do even worse if their support is geographically diffuse, with the UK Independence Party winning only one of the 650 seats for its nearly 13 per cent of the vote in 2015 (Table 2B), but territorially concentrated support in the same election gave the SNP a seat share that was nearly twice its vote share, with the party winning nearly all of Scotland's seats. Territorial concentration also helped the very small, regionally based parties from Wales and Northern Ireland win a roughly proportional share of seats. Voter turnout was about the same at both elections, at 65 per cent in 2010 and 66 per cent in 2015, but there was a big increase in the proportion of women in the House of Commons – a rise from 22 per cent in 2010 to 29 per cent in 2015.

Table 2 about here

Block vote

In this variant of plurality voting, there are multimember constituencies in which voters cast as many votes are there are candidates to be elected, with the winners being, for example, the top three candidates in a three-member constituency. Votes cannot be cumulated upon a single candidate, so the multimember nature of the system simply enhances the disproportionality typical of the SMP system because voters tend to cast all of their votes as a block for candidates of the same party, who often take all the seats, meaning that the majoritarian effect of this system is magnified when compared to SMP (Farrell 2011: 40). BV is sometimes called the multiple non-transferable vote (Electoral Reform Society 2016).

While BV was used to elect two members from most English parliamentary constituencies from the medieval period to the nineteenth century, SMP came to replace BV

as the franchise was extended and became the predominant system for elections to the House of Commons after 1885. BV was retained for some local council elections in England and Wales, however, and is perhaps best known for its use in London borough elections, where most wards (constituencies) elect three members. Table 3 provides two examples of how BV worked in London in 2014. In the first example, one party – Labour – has won all of the council's seats on 69 per cent of the vote (Barking and Dagenham, Table 3A).

In other cases, local elections can see independent candidates or local parties succeed in spite of the majoritarian nature of BV. This was the case for Tower Hamlets First in the borough of Tower Hamlets (Table 3B). In this example, Tower Hamlets First was the main challenger to Labour, coming in a close second, and while the Conservatives managed to win a nearly proportional share of seats, the smaller parties won none, so the level of disproportionality is rather high, at 9.8 on the Gallagher index, though not nearly as high as in Barking and Dagenham, at 25.4. Voter turnout was 36 and a half per cent in Barking and Dagenham and 47 per cent in Tower Hamlets, while Barking and Dagenham saw a greater proportion of women elected (39 per cent) than was the case in Tower Hamlets (24 per cent).

Table 3 about here

Supplementary vote

This majoritarian system came to be used in the UK as a result of the Labour Party's Plant Report, which recommended it for House of Commons elections. A Labour member of Parliament, Dale Campbell Savours, claimed to have invented the system, though it was used in Queensland (where it was known as the contingent vote) for state elections up to the mid-twentieth century and has been used to elect Sri Lanka's president since 1982 (Reilly 1997: 95). While this preferential, majoritarian system may superficially resemble Australia's AV, it does not allow the full expression of a voter's preferences, which can make very different

outcomes possible (Reilly 1997: 100). Despite receiving significant criticism in the UK when it was proposed in the 1990s (Reilly 1997: 95), the system has been used for mayoral elections in the English cities and boroughs that have chosen to use it, as well as for the election of Police and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales.

With SV, voters may indicate up to two candidate preferences, so there are two columns on the ballot paper, allowing voters to put one cross (x) in the first column for their first choice and another cross in the second column for their second choice. If no candidate wins over 50 per cent of the first preference vote, all candidates other than the top two are eliminated, with any second preference votes on their ballots for the remaining two candidates added to their totals. The candidate with the majority of votes, after the distribution of second preferences, wins. Direct elections for London Mayor have taken place since 2000, and Table 4 shows how the system worked at the 2016 election, in which Sadiq Khan won easily on nearly 57 per cent of the vote after the transfer of second preferences, with a voter turnout of 45 per cent.

Table 4 about here

Single transferable vote

Previously used for some of the university seats in the UK Parliament before the abolition of plural voting (giving university graduates more than one vote) in 1948, STV was used for elections to Northern Ireland's House of Commons after the Irish Free State became independent from the UK in the early 1920s. Not long afterwards, the system was replaced by SMP and STV was not restored for use in Northern Ireland until the 1970s, when local elections were held under this proportional system to represent minorities more effectively than the SMP and BV systems that the Unionist government had reinstated for local councils in 1922 after a brief use of STV (Coakley 2008: 169). Eventually, the creation of the Northern

Ireland Assembly by the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement meant STV would be used for this body as well. STV was also used to elect Northern Ireland's three MEPs and was introduced to elect Scotland's local councils from 2007 as part of a coalition agreement between Labour and the Liberal Democrats in the early years of Scottish devolution.

The top choice of many British electoral reformers, particularly those affiliated with the Electoral Reform Society, and the preference of the Liberal Party and its successor, the Liberal Democrats, STV appeals not only because of its proportionality, but also because of its preferential nature, allowing voters the freedom to rank any or all candidates in order of preference. This freedom can cause problems for parties that would prefer to get their top candidates into assemblies, for which a closed list system would be preferable. Parties would probably also prefer a system that is less kind to independent candidates than STV.

This preferential PR system is strongly associated with its use in the Republic of Ireland – Malta is the only other country that uses the system for its lower or only national legislative chamber. In Ireland, STV has periodically been reviewed, with critics arguing that the system facilitates too much constituency service, distracting deputies from their other roles and potentially reducing party cohesion (All-Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution 2002: 20). Irish voters rank candidates in order of preference within parliamentary constituencies that elect three, four, or five deputies, and because larger parties hope to win more than one of the available seats, they will normally nominate more than one candidate. Because candidates from the same party are competing, they must differentiate themselves on the basis of personal characteristics, rather than party policy, leading to the problems cited above. Defenders of STV argue that demands for constituency service are high around the world, regardless of electoral system (Gallagher and Komito 2005: 258-9), and that in Ireland, 'it would be disingenuous to suppose that somehow this would dissipate if the electoral system were changed' (Farrell 2011: 147).

Table 5 shows how STV works in Northern Ireland Assembly elections, where 18 six-member constituencies are used to elect the 108-member body. There was a multiparty system (effective number of parliamentary parties 4.3 in 2016), and the largest party was somewhat overrepresented, but the others, including the smallest parties, won seat shares that were quite proportional to their vote shares. The index of disproportionality was 5.1 for the 2016 election, while the voter turnout was 54 per cent. The proportion of women elected was 27 and a half per cent.

Table 5 about here

Regional party list proportional representation

The UK used SMP to elect its MEPs coming from Great Britain – Northern Ireland's were elected via STV – until a regional list PR system was introduced for the 1999 European Parliament election. The Labour government elected in 1997 introduced PR because all other EU members used PR systems to elect their MEPs and the European Parliament was bound by treaty to have a 'common electoral system', a fact pointed out in the 1993 Plant Report. Closed party lists were used, meaning that voters could not indicate any preference for a particular candidate. There had been support for opening up the lists to allow voters 'to change the order of candidates on the lists' (Lamport 1995: 20), but the Labour government implemented a closed-list system, even though the House of Lords had amended the original legislation to allow voters to choose individual candidates on party lists, an amendment that Home Secretary Jack Straw somewhat misleadingly said gave voters less choice when he reversed it (BBC News 1998).

The results from the 2014 election in Table 6 are from Great Britain only; Northern Ireland's three STV-elected MEPs included one each from the Democratic Unionist Party, Sinn Fein, and the Ulster Unionist Party. A multiparty system was present (effective number

of parliamentary parties is 3.6), with the populist, anti-political establishment UK Independence Party (Abedi and Lundberg 2009) – whose main goal was to pull the UK out of the EU – winning first place, beating the two major parties, with the pro-EU Liberal Democrats winning only one seat in this low-turnout (34 per cent) election. The index of disproportionality was 7.7 in the context of small- and medium-sized electoral regions, while the proportion of women elected was relatively high, at 41 per cent.

Table 6 about here

Mixed-member proportional representation

MMP is a mixed electoral system because in most places using it, voters cast two votes – one for a constituency candidate, and one for a party, so that representatives are elected in two different ways. The constituency candidates are typically elected by SMP while another tier of candidates is usually elected from regional or nationwide party lists. In an MMP system, the party list tier of representatives is elected in a compensatory way, so that the proportion of seats on a partisan basis in the region or nation overall – adding both constituency and list seats together – is roughly equivalent to the proportion of the list vote obtained by each party. Most mixed systems around the world are not PR systems because the two tiers of seats are either parallel – with the party list tier independent of and offering no compensation for the results of the constituency tier – or (much less often) there is a transfer votes from the constituency tier but only a weak level of compensation in the list tier that does not depend on actual seats won by parties in the constituency tier. These systems are often called 'mixed-member majoritarian' (MMM) and can be found worldwide, particularly in Asia (including Japan), Russia and other post-Soviet countries, as well as in a number of African countries (Shugart and Wattenberg 2001).

In the UK, Labour chose MMP for elections to the Scottish Parliament (and eventually the National Assembly for Wales and the London Assembly) when developing its plans for Scottish devolution in the 1990s. In Scotland and Wales, several regions are used for the allocation of party list members, while London has only one citywide region. The Scottish Parliament consists of 129 members, with 73 elected in single-member constituencies by SMP and the remaining 56 elected via closed party lists (or, in rare instances, as independent candidates) in eight electoral regions, each containing an average of nine constituencies while each region elects seven regional members. In Wales, the National Assembly consists of 60 members, with each of the five regions electing only four regional members, making it difficult to compensate for results from the average of eight constituencies in each region. The London Assembly is a far smaller body, with only 25 members elected from its 14 constituencies and from Londonwide party lists; a five per cent legal threshold applies in London, though no legal threshold exists for the other MMP-elected bodies.

Results from MMP elections in Scotland and Wales show that Scottish Parliament elections are typically more proportional in outcome than their Welsh counterparts. In Scotland, there is a disproportionality index of 7.4 in 2011 and 5.5 in 2016 (Table 7), while the index is 10.4 in 2011 and 13.0 in 2016 in Wales (Table 8). Nevertheless, the SNP won a majority of seats in 2011 (Table 7A), while Labour has never quite managed this feat in Wales. The effective number of parties has been around three in both nations' assemblies, though voter turnout has been somewhat higher in Scotland, at around 50 per cent, while Welsh turnout has been closer to 40 per cent. Both bodies have managed to elect a larger proportion of women than the House of Commons, with the Scottish Parliament over 30 per cent and the National Assembly for Wales over 40 per cent female in membership.

Tables 7 and 8 about here

While MMP is based upon the West German electoral system introduced in the late 1940s, it was New Zealand that coined the term ‘mixed-member proportional’ for this system, which replaced the country’s SMP system in 1996 after two referendums on the subject. MMP is now the preferred name for this electoral system used by political scientists worldwide (Farrell 2011; Lijphart 2012; Reynolds et al. 2005; Shugart and Wattenberg 2001). In the UK, the Hansard Society used the term ‘additional member system’ (AMS) back in the 1970s when it proposed an alternative to SMP for the House of Commons based upon the German system (Blake Commission 1976). This is unfortunate because the term MMP clearly distinguishes this mixed system from the non-proportional MMM, while AMS could refer to either version and does not indicate that the version used for elections in Scotland, Wales and London is actually a compensatory proportional one.

The term AMS is also problematic because it labels list-elected candidates as ‘additional members’, implying that they are somehow a secondary by-product of the process by virtue of being added on after the election of constituency candidates in order to top up the numbers – indeed, the term ‘top-up members’ is sometimes seen in the media and even in academic publications from British authors (Dunleavy and Margetts 2001). This kind of value-laden terminology can lead to a sense of inequality between constituency and regional members, a problem that was noted in a review of the Scottish MMP system, where the authors recommended that the term ‘mixed member system’ be used instead of AMS and that ‘additional’ members be called ‘regional’ members (Arbuthnott 2006: 4).

Experiences with PR electoral systems in the UK

The UK’s PR systems have led to results that are not highly proportional, though it would not be accurate to describe them as ‘semi-proportional’. Aside from getting categories confused – there are electoral formulas, such as MMM, that fit into the semi-proportional classification

(Lijphart 2012: 133) – this label seems to assume that PR systems are perfectly proportional, which is not the case. MMP elections to the National Assembly for Wales struggle the most, with high disproportionality index values (10.4 and 13.0 for the elections in Table 8), thanks to the small number of regional members available to compensate for constituency results, but the Scottish Parliament's disproportionality index values of 7.4 and 5.5 (Table 7) under MMP are similar to those of list PR-using Greece (7.88), Spain (7.28), Uruguay (6.05), Norway (4.53), and Portugal (4.43), according to Lijphart's analysis of 1945-2010 election results (2012: 150). STV in Northern Ireland (5.1, Table 5) shows disproportionality similar to that of the Republic of Ireland (3.93 in Lijphart 2012: 150), while British European Parliament results with list PR display higher levels of disproportionality, at 7.7 in 2014 (Table 6).

Much of the UK's electoral system innovation took place with MMP. Despite its relatively rare worldwide occurrence, MMP has been found to be the experts' top choice, beating STV into second place (Bowler et al. 2005). Although MMP may be popular among political scientists, there has been some controversy in the UK surrounding the competition between constituency and regional members over constituency service, with some constituency members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) and Welsh Assembly Members (AMs) complaining about being 'shadowed' by regional members trying to enhance their name recognition among constituents to help with their efforts to stand as local constituency candidates at the next election. This competition over constituency service could be good for British constituents, reducing the safety of seats for constituency incumbents and improving the responsiveness of representative democracy (Lundberg 2006).

Tensions between constituency and regional representatives are far less common in Germany, where most people do not distinguish between the two different types of representatives (Burkett 1985: 130), largely because dual candidacy – the ability of candidates to stand in both constituencies and on party lists simultaneously – is common (Jesse 1988:

120; Massicotte 2004: 73). Candidates losing in constituency contests can be elected through party lists when they are high enough on their lists and then usually set up offices in constituencies where they were defeated, so shadowing of constituency-elected candidates is typical and constituents cannot tell who was 'directly' elected in the constituency (Burkett 1985: 129-30). In New Zealand, which has used MMP since it replaced SMP in 1996, dual candidacy has been more controversial, probably due to the long history of SMP, but a 2012 review of MMP found that a majority of public submissions supported the retention of dual candidacy, which the New Zealand Electoral Commission recommended be retained (NZ Electoral Commission 2012: 37-38).

The different electoral routes for representatives elected under MMP have caused some concern in Britain, however, partially due to the public's familiarity with SMP and the constituency role of representatives elected under it, and partially for partisan reasons. The issue of accountability – to constituents or to the party organisations that rank the closed party lists used in MMP – has been raised by some politicians and journalists who seem to believe that party list-elected members of the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales are 'second-class' representatives (Lundberg 2007b: 3-4). There is also the broader question of what kind of constituency role should be played by regional members. Constituency service in Scotland and Wales has been explored by a number of studies (Bradbury and Mitchell 2007; Bradbury and Russell 2005; Carman and Shephard 2007; Cowley and Lochore 2000; Lundberg 2007b; McCabe and McCormick 2000). Self-reported estimates of how time is allocated show that constituency MSPs and AMs spent more of their work time on constituency service than did their regional counterparts (Lundberg 2007b: 178-9). This difference could be due to rational electoral incentives, as research in Germany has shown (Klingemann and Wessels 2001; Lancaster and Patterson 1990), though personal reasons, such as simply the enjoyment of constituency service, could also be at work.

While MMP got caught up in bitter partisan competition between the SNP and Labour in Scotland (Lundberg 2014), the system also ran into controversy in Wales, where dual candidacy became so unpopular with Labour that the practice was banned for 2007 and 2011 elections to the National Assembly (though not for the Scottish Parliament or London Assembly), with the ban only rescinded when the Conservative/Liberal Democrat government at Westminster abolished it with the passage of the Wales Act 2014. There was no ban initially, with Labour candidates standing as dual candidates in Wales before 2007, but Welsh Secretary Peter Hain claimed that candidates losing constituency races but winning via regional lists had been 'rejected by the voters' and should not be allowed to enter the Assembly (Lundberg 2007b: 164). The UK Electoral Commission found no evidence supporting the Hain's assertion that the public disapproved of the dual candidacy and argued that the likely beneficiaries of the ban would be constituency (mainly Labour) incumbents because opposition parties would probably place their best candidates on the regional lists, leaving the constituency races to sacrificial lambs (UK Electoral Commission 2005: 5-6).

Labour's complaints about dual candidacy appeared to be based on partisan self-interest, according to the Conservative Welsh Secretary and nearly everyone else outside the Labour Party who commented on the plans to rescind the ban (Roberts 2013), although Labour's ideology also lends itself to a zero-sum view of representation and a majoritarian view of democracy uneasy about political pluralism and incompatible with the positive-sum logic of PR (Lundberg 2007b: 164-5). Aside from Labour, no party opposed the UK Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government's abolition of the dual candidacy ban in the Wales Act 2014, making the practice legal once again for National Assembly elections from 2016.

Labour should be given credit, however, for the large proportion of female members of the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales (relative to the female proportion

of members of the House of Commons). This achievement was not so much a result of PR, but rather to Labour's 'twinning' procedures used in the single-member constituency component of MMP in which the party would match pairs of constituencies that seemed equally winnable, with one getting a female candidate (Russell et al. 2002: 56). Labour's success at winning constituency seats – a feature of the early years of devolution, particularly in Scotland – meant that many women were elected. For the 1999 elections, the SNP rejected formal use of a 'zipping' procedure to alternate male and female candidates on regional party lists, but did informally encourage the placing of female candidates higher up the lists so that nearly half of the party's elected regional members were women; Plaid used a similar approach in Wales with similar results (Russell et al. 2002: 60-62). Contentious as these efforts were for all parties – legal action was actually taken against Labour's efforts on grounds of sex discrimination – the result was a big increase in female representation.

Conclusion: Continuity in the face of change

The UK had six different electoral systems operating at various levels of governance in the early twenty-first century. While the House of Commons resisted reform attempts in the late twentieth century, the new institutions and positions created by devolution allow for a study of the interaction of different electoral and party systems. Although there has been some interaction between the different levels of governance in the UK since devolution that has affected Westminster – most notably in the decline of Scottish Labour and the rise of the SNP, which won 56 of Scotland's 59 seats in the House of Commons, replacing the Liberal Democrats as the UK's third-largest party in 2015 – there has been little 'bottom-up' impact.

Despite its use at several levels of UK governance, PR had not captured the British public's imagination, and the likelihood of a shift from SMP to PR for the House of Commons appeared low (Renwick 2009), even though it is likely that SMP 'has lost the battle of ideas' (Blais and Shugart 2008: 206), with partisan interests overcoming most people's

idea of electoral system fairness. While the Labour Party did introduce new electoral systems in the late twentieth century, the party failed to embrace the pluralism of party politics that accompanied these institutional reforms, perhaps being prevented from doing so by the majoritarian mentality permeating both major parties in the UK. With both the Conservatives and Labour apparently against change for the House of Commons, a third wave of electoral reform seemed unlikely.

Table 1: Electoral systems in use in the UK in early twenty-first century

Majoritarian	*Proportional*
Single-member plurality	Single transferable vote
Block vote	Regional list proportional representation
Supplementary vote	Mixed-member proportional representation

Table 2: House of Commons elections

A. 6 May 2010

Party	*% Votes*	*Seats won*	*% Seats*
Conservative	36.1	307	47.2
Labour	29.0	258	39.7
Liberal Democrat	23.0	57	8.8
UK Independence	3.1	0	0
British National	1.9	0	0
Scottish National	1.7	6	0.9
Green	1.0	1	0.2
Sinn Fein	0.6	5	0.8
Democratic Unionist	0.6	8	1.2
Plaid Cymru	0.6	3	0.5
Social Democratic and Labour	0.4	3	0.5
Alliance	0.1	1	0.2
Total (including Speaker seeking re-election)		*650*	
•Voter turnout: 65.1% •Women elected: 143 (22.0%) •Effective number of parliamentary parties: 2.6 •Index of disproportionality (Michael Gallagher's Least Squares): 14.9			

B. 7 May 2015

Party	*% Votes*	*Seats won*	*% Seats*
Conservative	36.9	331	50.9
Labour	30.4	232	35.7
UK Independence	12.6	1	0.2
Liberal Democrat	7.9	8	1.2
Scottish National	4.7	56	8.6
Green	3.8	1	0.2
Democratic Unionist	0.6	8	1.2
Plaid Cymru	0.6	3	0.5
Sinn Fein	0.6	4	0.6
Ulster Unionist	0.4	2	0.3
Social Democratic and Labour	0.3	3	0.5
Total (including Speaker seeking re-election)		*650*	
•Voter turnout: 66.1% •Women elected: 191 (29.4%) •Effective number of parliamentary parties: 2.5 •Index of disproportionality (Michael Gallagher's Least Squares): 15.0			

Sources: BBC News (2010; 2015)

Table 3: London borough elections, 22 May 2014

A. Barking and Dagenham

Party	*% Votes*	*Seats won*	*% Seats*
Labour	69.1	51	100.0
UK Independence	15.4	0	0
Conservative	9.9	0	0
Liberal Democrat	1.7	0	0
Total		*51*	
•Voter turnout: 36.5% •Women elected: 20 (39.2%) •Effective number of parliamentary parties: 1.0 •Index of disproportionality (Michael Gallagher's Least Squares): 25.4			

B. Tower Hamlets

Party	*% Votes*	*Seats won*	*% Seats*
Labour	38.6	22	48.9
Tower Hamlets First	34.9	18	40.0
Conservative	12.1	5	11.1
Green	6.3	0	0
Liberal Democrat	3.2	0	0
UK Independence	2.9	0	0
Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition	1.2	0	0
Total		*45*	
•Voter turnout: 47.2% •Women elected: 11 (24.4%) •Effective number of parliamentary parties: 2.4 •Index of disproportionality (Michael Gallagher's Least Squares): 9.8			

Sources: Barking and Dagenham (2014); Tower Hamlets (2014)

Table 4: London Mayor election, 5 May 2016

Candidate	*Party*	*% 1st preference vote*	*% 2nd preference votes*	*% Vote after 2nd preference distribution for top two candidates*
Sadiq Khan	Labour	44.2	17.5	56.8
Zac Goldsmith	Conservative	35.0	11.3	43.2
Sian Berry	Green	5.8	21.2	
Caroline Pidgeon	Liberal Democrat	4.6	15.2	
Peter Whittle	UK Independence	3.6	10.1	
Sophie Walker	Women's Equality	2.0	9.0	
George Galloway	Respect	1.4	5.3	
Paul Golding	Britain First	1.2	3.3	
•Voter turnout: 45.3%				

Sources: BBC News (2016a); London Elects (2016)

Table 5: Northern Ireland Assembly election, 5 May 2016

Party	*% 1st preference vote*	*Seats won*	*% Seats won*
Democratic Unionist	29.2	38	35.2
Sinn Fein	24.0	28	25.9
Ulster Unionist	12.6	16	14.8
Social Democratic and Labour	12.0	12	11.1
Alliance	7.0	8	7.4
Traditional Unionist Voice	3.4	1	0.9
Green	2.7	2	1.9
People Before Profit Alliance	2.0	2	1.9
Total (including an independent)		*108*	
•Voter turnout: 54.2% •Women elected: 30 (27.5%) •Effective number of parliamentary parties: 4.3 •Index of disproportionality (Michael Gallagher's Least Squares): 5.1			

Source: BBC News (2016b)

Table 6: European Parliament members elected from Great Britain, 22 May 2014

Party	*% Vote*	*Seats*	*% Seats*
UK Independence	27.5	24	34.3
Labour	25.4	20	28.6
Conservative	23.9	19	27.1
Green	7.9	3	4.3
Liberal Democrat	6.9	1	1.4
Scottish National	2.5	2	2.9
English Democrat	1.8	0	0
An Independence From Europe	1.4	0	0
British National	1.1	0	0
Socialist Labour	1.1	0	0
No2EU	1.0	0	0
Plaid Cymru	0.7	1	1.4
Total		*70*	
•UK-wide voter turnout: 34.2% •Women elected (GB + NI): 41% •Effective number of parliamentary parties: 3.6 •Index of disproportionality (Michael Gallagher's Least Squares): 7.7			

Source: BBC News (2014)

Table 7: Scottish Parliament elections

A. 5 May 2011

Party	*% Regional vote*	*Regional seats*	*% Constituency vote*	*Constituency seats*	*Total seats*	*% Seats*
Scottish National	44.0	16	45.4	53	69	53.5
Labour	26.3	22	31.7	15	37	28.7
Conservative	12.4	12	13.9	3	15	11.6
Liberal Democrat	5.2	3	7.9	2	5	3.9
Greens	4.4	2	-	-	2	1.6
All Scotland Pensioners	1.7	0	0.1	0	0	0
Total (including an independent)		*56*		*73*	*129*	
•Voter turnout: 51.1% •Women elected: 45 (34.9%) •Effective number of parliamentary parties: 2.6 •Index of disproportionality (Michael Gallagher's Least Squares): 7.4						

B. 5 May 2016

Party	*% Regional vote*	*Regional seats*	*% Constituency vote*	*Constituency seats*	*Total seats*	*% Seats*
Scottish National	41.7	4	46.5	59	63	48.8
Conservative	22.9	24	22.0	7	31	24.0
Labour	19.1	21	22.6	3	24	18.6
Greens	6.6	6	0.6	0	6	4.7
Liberal Democrat	5.2	1	7.8	4	5	3.9
UK Independence	2.0	0	-	-	0	0
Total		*56*		*73*	*129*	
•Voter turnout: 55.6% •Women elected: 45 (34.9%) •Effective number of parliamentary parties: 3.0 •Index of disproportionality (Michael Gallagher's Least Squares): 5.5						

Sources: BBC News (2011a; 2016c)

Table 8: National Assembly for Wales elections

A. 5 May 2011

Party	*% Regional vote*	*Regional seats*	*% Constituency vote*	*Constituency seats*	*Total seats*	*% Seats*
Labour	36.9	2	42.3	28	30	50.0
Conservative	22.5	8	25.0	6	14	23.3
Plaid Cymru	17.9	6	19.3	5	11	18.3
Liberal Democrat	8.0	4	10.6	1	5	8.3
UK Independence	4.6	0	1.8	0	0	0
Greens	3.4	0	0.2	0	0	0
British National	2.4	0	0.7	0	0	0
Socialist Labour	2.4	0	-	0	0	
Total		*20*		*40*	*60*	
•Voter turnout: 42.2% •Women elected: 25 (41.7%) •Effective number of parliamentary parties: 2.9 •Index of disproportionality (Michael Gallagher's Least Squares): 10.4						

B. 5 May 2016

Party	*% Regional vote*	*Regional seats*	*% Constituency vote*	*Constituency seats*	*Total seats*	*% Seats*
Labour	31.5	2	34.7	27	29	48.3
Plaid Cymru	20.8	6	20.5	6	12	20.0
Conservative	18.8	5	21.1	6	11	18.3
UK Independence	13.0	7	12.5	0	7	11.7
Liberal Democrat	6.5	0	7.7	1	1	1.7
Abolish the Welsh Assembly	4.4	0	-	0	0	0
Greens	3.0	0	2.5	0	0	0
Total		*20*		*40*	*60*	
•Voter turnout: 45.3% •Women elected: 25 (41.7%) •Effective number of parliamentary parties: 3.1 •Index of disproportionality (Michael Gallagher's Least Squares): 13.0						

Sources: BBC News (2011b; 2016d)

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[1] Some do not like the term SMP – for a discussion of terminology, see the blog post by Shugart (2014).