

- An electoral system : –
  - Set rules for election
  - Plays crucial role in shaping the party system &
  - Shapes political culture of the country.
  - Shapes the outcome of the election by providing for an election mechanism and election process
- The electoral system refers to a set of rules through which people get to choose their representatives or political leaders.
- Election process through which representation of several political parties is determined in the legislature.
- Electoral systems not only works at the national level but are also used extensively in determining the composition of local bodies.
- It is the deciding factor for the various combinations of political parties/groups/individuals that exist at the legislative & executive level in a country.
- Formation of coalitions, various strategies adopted by political parties to get into the legislature, and their election manifestos - all depend on what kind of electoral system exist in their political system.
- An electoral system is not a static concept; rather it is a dynamic system which has been evolving continuously as needed by the countries to suit their political system.
- An electoral system facilitates the democratic culture to perform in its true spirit.
- Bernard Grofman has identified six basic components of an electoral system. These are
  - 1) Defining the eligibility for contesting the election (individuals or party or combination of both);
  - 2) Specifying rules within the party for identifying the party's candidates or setting the criteria for ranking the candidates in a party list,
  - 3) Specification of ballot type,
  - 4) Specification of constituencies (districts),
  - 5) Determination of election timing, and
  - 6) Rules for ballot aggregation.
- Apart from this, the term electoral system also refer to rules & regulations for the voters, campaigning, advertising, deciding on phases of elections, and so on (Krupavičius, Isoda, Vaišnoras 2013).
- As mentioned by Rae (1971), electoral systems have three dimensions: the ballot structure, the district structure, & the electoral formula
- Ballot structure defines the nature of ballot system and the different ways in which it is casted and counted.
- For instance, whether votes are casted for either Individuals or a group of individuals (party list) or a combination of both; how many votes are supposed

to be casted for candidates and/or lists; in case more than one votes are to be casted, then whether it is based on preference or rank of candidates/list in any order; and finally, whether there is single round or multiple rounds of voting

- District structure comprises of the area, number, & hierarchy of electoral districts.
- Here, electoral districts are those areas in which elections are conducted.
- There can be one single seated or multiple seated district structures, that is the entire country can be considered as a national electoral district or it may be divided into several small electoral constituencies.
- In case of latter, there may exist a certain kind of hierarchy such as upper and lower tiers.
- There may be one or many seats in any electoral district.
- The electoral formula refers to the process through which votes get transformed into seats.
- The most popular formulas are the plurality, majority, and proportional representation (PR) systems.
- These formulas may vary as per the district structure.

#### CLASSIFICATION OF ELECTORAL SYSTEM

- Generally, the electoral system is classified into three main categories based on the rules decided for conversion of votes into seats in the legislature: Majoritarian system; Proportional Representation system and the Mixed system.
- Majoritarian Method refers to a system where larger parties get to represent higher number of seats, while the Proportional Representation (PR) systems depicts a system where seats are decided in proportion to the votes acquired in the election.
- Mixed systems are the combination of the majoritarian and PR systems
- In Majoritarian system, parties getting 30 percent of votes may emerge as the ruling parties resulting in mostly two-party systems or single- party governments such as in 2010 elections in the U.K.
- The Conservatives have held power for a prolonged period even though they have never earned more than 40-45 percent of total electoral votes.
- Majoritarian system may result in huge disparities as the seats are not allocated in proportion of votes acquired.
- Also, there are higher chances for a party with minimum two-fifth of votes to acquire the political power which might impact the efficacy of the government and the political system.
- In PR system, parties get representation on seats according to the percentage of votes acquired by them in elections.

- For instance, a party getting 40 percent of votes get to represent on 40 percent of total legislative seats, thus reducing the possibilities of single-party rule.
- PR systems usually result in multiparty systems or in coalition governments assuring a better representative system and more effective political system.
- The governments thus formed are popular governments and are better at managing the popular mandate.
- Mixed systems aim to combine the benefits of PR and single-member plurality systems in various ways possible.
- There are several arrangements in the Majoritarian System, Proportional Representation System and Mixed systems which are designed by countries to suit their political culture.

#### MAJORITARIAN SYSTEMS

##### SINGLE MEMBER PLURALITY SYSTEM

- In the single member plurality (SMP) system, the person/party holding maximum number of votes is the winner.
- This system is popular in the UK, USA, Canada, India, and some other countries which have had their political systems derived from the British colonial past.
- In this system, the entire area gets divided into single-member constituencies which are generally of equal size.
- The electoral votes are cast for a single candidate for each constituency, i.e., each voter gets to vote for a single candidate to govern for their constituency
- This system, which is also called the First Past the Post System, there is a higher probability of winning such election despite getting minority votes in favour.
- For example, if five candidates contesting an election get 32, 25, 14, 18, 11 votes out of total 100 votes polled, the winner is the one who has secured the largest number of votes, 32 votes
- This means that although the majority of votes (100-32=68 votes) were not favouring this candidate, yet this candidate is declared winner because the maximum number of votes casted in favour of any candidate belongs to him
- This accounts for a major drawback of the First Past the Post System as it results in wastage of many votes
- There is higher possibility of smaller political parties getting poor coverage and attention
- It dilutes the impact of smaller groups and political parties in the political system
- Since, the elected candidate usually enjoys only minority support, the legitimacy of such governments also can be questioned
- It may result in an unaccountable government because the winner is decided on the basis of simple majority which may not be in essence the choice of majority of population.

- Despite these limitations, there remain various advantages associated with this system
- The government formed in such systems claim clear mandate from the electorates even though it based on simple majority.
- This helps in avoiding any kind of radical group or extremism from gaining strength in the political system.
- The single-member constituencies ensures that every part of country gets adequate representations in the national legislature
- It also tends to provide the voters with ample choices of candidates and varying criteria of choosing the representatives

##### SECOND -BALLOT SYSTEM

- This method has managed to address the major shortcoming of SMP system to a large extent.
- To ensure that the winning candidate gets decided not only on the basis of simple majority but also on absolute majority, Second-Ballot system is used.
- It has been an accepted electoral system in France, Chile, Austria and Russia.
- As followed in the SMP system, the entire country is divided into several single-member constituencies and people's vote is based on single-choice out of many candidates contesting the election. However, there are two rounds of voting.
- After the first round of voting, the second round of voting is held between the leading two candidates who have emerged as winners in the first round.
- This gives people the freedom to choose any candidate in the first round, but then limits the choice to the top two contenders so that a candidate with absolute majority emerges as winner.
- Because of this format, this system is also described as „Mixed Majority-Plurality“ system
- This system is also followed in the USA when the two main political parties conduct internal election to decide on their leadership and presidential candidates
- Rounds of voting continue to take place until any of their candidates reach an absolute majority.
- It fails to provide ample opportunities to the smaller parties and individual candidates.
- In this system, there is higher tendency of larger parties' candidates to secure the top two positions and relegating the significant positions of the third parties which may not be far behind from the top two contenders
- This system may also encourage the candidates to opt for popularity over party principles resulting in unstable and corrupt contenders reaching the top two positions
- Holding election twice in any country will cost extra load on the country's treasury & strain the electorate's patience.
- Despite these shortcomings, it ensures that the elected candidate secures consent of most of the population and is more widely accepted.

- It gives the electorates also ample choices in the first round and preferential choice in the second round leading to maximum satisfaction of the electorates to the outcomes of such rigorous event
- The legitimacy of the candidate thus elected remains unquestioned which consequently leads to a strong and stable governance system unlike that of the SMP system.

#### ALTERNATIVE/SUPPLEMENTARY VOTE SYSTEM

- It is generally used in internal election in different countries and not as a mandatory method to decide the national leadership of any country.
- For instance, the election in House of Representatives in Australia is decided by using the Alternative Vote (AV) method
- While the election of Mayor in London, United Kingdom is decided by the Supplementary Vote (SV) method, which can be described as a variant of the AV method.
- The SV and AV methods are based on the same principles and differ in details.
- In both the systems, there are single-member constituencies, with the electorate getting chance to cast multiple votes in accordance with their preference.
- Electorates rank their candidates according to their choices and preferences.
- The first preference is considered as the main vote, while the other ranks are considered as alternative or supplementary vote
- In AV system, this ranking is given to each of the candidate contesting the election but in the SV system, there is only one supplementary vote available for the electorates.
- If 7 candidates are contesting the election, then according to the AV system, the electorates will rank the candidates as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7;
- But in the SV system the candidate will choose their topmost favourite and rank them 1 and may give 2 to their second most favourite candidate.
- Thus, there are many alternative votes and only one supplementary vote.
- The votes are counted according to the first preferences and the candidates acquiring least votes get eliminated and their votes are distributed among others in order of second preference.
- This process is repeated till an absolute majority is reached by one of the candidates
- The difference between the AV and the SV system : – While in the AV system the elimination and redistribution of votes is done multiple times but in the SV system in single round top two candidates are decided and the subsequent round decides the winner.
- The AV/SV system is detailed and complex process, but it tends to result in single-party or two-party system where larger parties overshadow the smaller parties and individual candidate

- The preferential counting may result in the same outcome as that of SMP system – the winner may have lesser first preference votes, yet they get chosen to govern on behalf the entire population
- This system ensures that fewer votes are wasted, and a candidate's popularity and acceptance is decided on the basis of preferential votes
- It is also known as „Limited Vote Plan“ or „Approval Voting“ – adopted by several private associations in the past and also in parliamentary elections in 1990 in various Eastern European countries (Belarus, Ukraine).
- It ensure that the winning candidate wins absolute majority of votes or minimum 50 percent of votes.

#### CONDORCET METHOD

- Derived from the name of the founder Marquis de Condorcet, a mathematician from France, this method is slightly more complex.
- To some extent it stands on the same principle of AV system because the voters need to put their candidates on order of their preferences but in pairwise comparison.
- For example, if there are 3 candidates X, Y, Z contesting the election then the voters must vote pairwise in XY, YZ and XZ.
- The one who gets most votes is declared as the winner.
- This method may seem to be more accurate and fairer in terms of deciding the representation but due to its complex nature it has not been practiced widely.
- For a country where large number of candidates contest for elections, it will not be possible for voters to make all the pairs and judge accordingly

#### PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM

- The term “Proportional Representation” is generally used as an umbrella term for several methods and mechanisms that aim to establish proportionality in the election outcomes.
- The underlying principle for all the methods is to match the share of seats won with the share of votes won.
- The legislative seats are shared in direct proportion to the votes acquired by the party/candidates in the election.
- Some of the well known and practised examples include the “Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) or Additional Member System (AMS)”, “Single-Transferable-Vote (STV) System”, “Party-List System”, “Cumulative Vote System”, and “Slate System”.

#### SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE SYSTEM (STV)

- This system was first proposed by Thomas Hare and is therefore also known as “Hare System”.
- It is widely used in The Republic of Ireland and the UK (Northern Ireland Assembly) as these states are made up of multi-member constituencies and the representatives elected from each constituency vary from minimum three to maximum eight.

- However, this does not imply that the voters get to cast multiple votes.
  - The voters are entitled to only one vote, but it is a preferential voting system as practiced in AV system.
  - Voters single vote gets transferred according to their second and third preferences and so on till a candidate is able to secure the defined „quota“ which again is defined in terms of total votes acquired and total number of seats.
  - In these multi-member constituencies, the winning criterion for a candidate is achieving the defined quota which is calculated according to the Droop formula :  $Quota = (Total\ Votes / Total\ Seats + 1) + 1$
  - If the total number of votes is 100 & total number of representatives allotted are 4, then all the 4 candidates need to achieve  $1 + (100/1+4) = 21$  votes each in order to win the election.
  - In case none of the candidates get the required Droop Quota then the candidate getting least number of votes get eliminated and his votes get transferred according to their second preferences.
  - This process is repeated until all the required 4 candidates get 21 votes each.
  - In other case, if the candidate surpasses the Droop quota, then all the excess votes acquired by that very candidate also get transferred in accordance with the next preference.
  - This System is used in Rajya Sabha elections in India where each state assembly works as one multi-member constituency, and the MLAs get one transferable vote each.
  - Australian Senate, Parliament of Malta and Ireland have also adopted this system.
  - This system has managed to reduce the „wastage“ of votes – provides for higher possibilities of proportional representation.
  - All the candidates are judged and elected on equal criteria and remain at par with each other in representing the constituency, which in turn ensures better and more balanced governance system
  - It also provides the voters, ample choices to rank their candidates and get varied combination of representatives, and reduces the possibility of single-party dominance in the political system
  - Multi-member constituencies may result in abrupt combinations of representatives which may hamper smooth and speedy decision- making capabilities leading to an inefficient governance system.
  - Moreover, all candidates hold same value and position even though some of them might be more widely accepted and popular than the others.
  - Hence, public liking/popularity/acceptance also gets compromised to a certain extent as all the winners hold equal importance.
- PARTY LIST SYSTEM**
- This system is based on voting done for party rather than the candidates.
  - The Party-List system is followed in both single-member constituencies as well as multi-member constituencies
  - States of European Union (Belgium, Luxembourg); also the European Parliament gets elected following this method
  - It is also followed in those countries where the entire country is considered as a single constituency such as Israel, and Switzerland
  - Voter is well aware of all the candidates contesting the election as the parties list their candidates in order of the preference.
  - Voters cast their votes in favour of their preferred party after knowing the list of the candidates.
  - Parties share the seats in direct proportion with the votes acquired.
  - For instance, if a party achieves 40 percent of votes, then it gets to represent 40 percent of seats
  - In Switzerland this system has been slightly modified where the voters get a blank vote, and they can either vote for a party-list or they can create their own hybrid-list which consists of candidates from different party-lists.
  - It can be further classified in two forms: Open-list systems and closed-list systems.
  - The open-list system is an arrangement where voters cast their vote for both the party and the candidate within the party. So, they have their say in determining who in the party-list should be chosen for the said position.
  - For example, in Finland, the voters cast two votes- one for the party and other for the candidate within that Party.
  - Closed-list system, does not give any choice to the voter in context of the candidate.
  - The list is prepared by the party and presented to the electorate.
  - In Israel which has adopted this system, voters accept the list of candidates nominated by the party and cast their vote in favour of the party.
  - Belgium follows the mid-way between the closed-list and the open-list system – voter gets to choose either the list provided by the party or any individual candidate and where lower placed candidate can get higher position, acquiring the specified minimum number of preferential votes.
  - Assumed as the purest form of proportional representation as it assures fair chance to both small and big parties.
  - It shows inclusion of smaller/neglected/marginalized sections of society such as women and minorities.
  - The voter gets an idea as to which party has more inclusive list
  - This results in a more inclusive society which rests on higher possibilities of negotiations, bargain, and consensus.
  - However, the Party List system runs the risk of having an unstable, fragmented, and weak government



- Possibly a certain candidate may have influential position in the party but lack mass appeal, leading to a possible disaffection after the leader is elected.

#### MIXED ELECTORAL SYSTEM

- This category includes systems that combine elements of each of the first two types to produce a pattern somewhat in between, that is, with some elements of majoritarian and some of proportionality but not falling completely under either of them

#### MIXED-MEMBER PROPORTIONAL OR ADDITIONAL MEMBER SYSTEM

- By combining the SMP system & the Party-list system
- Some seats get filled by SMP method while rest of the seats are filled using the Party-List system.
- In Germany where 50 percent of the seats are filled by SMP system particularly in the single- member constituency.
- Scotland, Italy & Wales have adopted MMP system
- The voters are entitled to two votes each- one for the candidate and other for the party – to maintain the difference between the constituency representative and ministerial position
- Representative of the constituency is gets chosen by the people directly through the SMP system – Minister is elected in a more proportional manner with the party getting its due importance.
- Voters get the choice of electing their constituency representative from a different party and the government from a different one, which leads to an efficient „checks and balance“ system in place.

#### SEMI-PROPORTIONAL METHOD

- The combination of majoritarian method and the proportional representation method
- Followed in New Zealand and India – to ensure the involvement of ethnic minorities and backward classes in the political system
- Voters from all category and castes can vote but contesting candidates must be from SC or ST category.

#### CUMULATIVE VOTE SYSTEM

- Another variation of semi-proportional method – vote system in which voters are entitled for multiple votes in multi-member constituencies.
- The number of members to be elected to represent a constituency equals the number of votes casted by every voter.
- Thus, if there are 5 members to be elected from a single constituency, then each voter gets to cast 5 votes.
- Here the voter is free to cast all the votes to a single candidate, or one vote to each of those contesting candidates or divide the votes among the candidates as per his/her discretion

- The top five candidates are considered as winner
- #### SLATE SYSTEM

- This system is exclusively used in USA during the election of President's Electoral College.
- It is closely related to Party-List system – the list prepared by party is called as "Slate".
- The voters get the "slates" from both the Democratic and the Republican Party and vote for their preferred slate i.e., they vote for an entire list of candidates and not any one candidate in particular.
- The slate, which acquires 51 percent of votes, wins the entire state
- This aspect is somewhat like the "first-past-the-post" system however, the major difference remains the criteria of earning 51 percent of total votes to win the election
- Also, in the "first-past-the-post" system, the constituencies are represented by single candidate while in the "slate system" the constituencies are represented by more than one member and the party winning 51 percent votes gets to appoint its members listed as representatives.
- Hence, the constituencies are represented by multiple members belonging to one party.

#### COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF ELECTORAL PROCESSES

- Many countries have tried to alter the elections by simple shifting from one kind of electoral system to another or by opting for a combination of two different electoral systems.
- France has changed its electoral systems more frequently than others.
- The parliamentary elections were held according to second-ballot system till 1985, when it was replaced by Party-List system under the influence of the Socialist Party which controlled the national assembly in the 1980s and 1990s
- A major factor driving such change was derived from the hitherto President Mitterrand's strong desire to strengthen Socialist representation in the National Assembly.
- United Kingdom which has seen changes in the electoral systems of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland from single-member plurality (SMP) to proportional methods with the SMP system retained in general election
- This is said to be the result of an active interest of Labour Party in opposition towards electoral reforms particularly for devolved bodies.
- New Zealand has also shifted its electoral system from SMP to PR system since 1993.
- Italy has also experimented by replacing its erstwhile party-list system with the MMP/AM system and returning to the party-list system in 2003