

# Electoral Reform In The UK: a Veto-Player Analysis

Adrian Blau

Politics, University of Manchester

*Adrian.Blau@manchester.ac.uk*

Paper for EPOP conference, University of Nottingham, 8-10 Sept 2006. Paper originally given at Université de Montréal, 17-18 June 2006; I haven't had a chance to change it yet but a *lot* will change.

**Draft: please do not cite. Comments welcome – before Sept 20th please!**

## 1. Introduction

In single-member district (SMD) electoral systems, the translation of votes to seats is potentially very variable. The more proportional the electoral system, the less likely that a party's ratio of seats to votes will fall markedly as its vote-share falls. But in systems with low district magnitude, a party which drops from a high to a low vote-share may move from being very over-represented to very under-represented. This inherently weakens SMD systems: parties may have an incentive to change the system if they are losing, or expect to lose, significant numbers of votes.

But this weakness may not be fatal. Whether it leads to electoral reform depends on many factors. One is timing. If a party's decline is sudden or unexpected it may not have time to reform the electoral system. The British Liberals did not reform the system in 1918; by 1924 they were a minor party with just 40 seats (Bogdanor 1981, 128-37). The Japanese LDP splintered after missing its chance to reform the SNTV electoral system on favourable terms (Woodall 1999, 23-4). Parties are also diverse, and their members' different interests, attitudes and dispositions do not always point in the same direction.

In such situations, the winset of opportunity is narrow. The winset is the set of policies that can defeat the status quo, and it may be that few if any alternative electoral systems could get enough support to replace the Single-Member Plurality (SMP) electoral system for House of Commons elections. This paper thus adopts (informal) veto player theory to analyse more precisely the types of electoral system that could get majority support. After explaining why electoral reform may now be on the political agenda (sections 2 and 3), I examine electoral reform as a veto game with the Labour leadership as the agenda-setter. The agenda-setter, I show, also has 'path-setting' powers – the ability to choose between different legislative paths for

an electoral reform bill. Different paths involve different winsets due to the different probabilities of veto and the different acceptable electoral systems (section 4).

This paper concentrates especially on paths where a Commons majority is crucial. It is often said that MPs would not vote for electoral reform as they would lose their seats: this is like turkeys voting for Christmas. (For examples of this view, type ‘electoral reform turkeys Christmas’ on an internet search engine.) I show that two electoral reforms could get majority support on this criterion: most obviously the Alternative Vote (AV), and less obviously a Mixed-Member System (MMS) where the extra seats are added to existing SMP seats, creating a super-sized chamber (section 5). But although both systems meet the self-interest criterion, for other reasons the electoral arithmetic may be very tight (sections 6 and 7). In any case, electoral reform is not necessarily in a declining party’s interest (section 8).

Timing is crucial. Standard veto player theory (for example Tsebelis 2002) is often rather static. But changing electoral systems may require reformers to think ahead to future winsets and if needs be to act pre-emptively – introducing electoral reform before majority support disappears. This may not be possible, especially under conditions of uncertainty. Overall, SMP’s weaknesses mean that electoral reform could well become a prominent issue, the prospects for change are slimmer than is sometimes implied.

A few terminological and conceptual points. My definition of electoral reform follows Lijphart (1994, 13) and is broader than Shugart’s (2006, 1) definition – ‘the enactment of a legislative electoral system that operates on an *opposite* principle from the preexisting system’ (emphasis added). The ‘alternatives to plurality rule’ which Shugart discusses are indeed proportional (Shugart 2006, 5-6), but AV was the most likely alternative in 20th century British politics. So, we either need another category for modest changes like AV, or, as in this paper, we can interpret electoral reform more broadly and then distinguish between reforms which are strongly proportional, moderately proportional and majoritarian. (There are other dimensions for considering the degree of change, of course, but they are not relevant in this paper.)

I differ from some studies when I talk about preferences being based not only on interests but also on *attitudes* and *dispositions*. Many scholars imply that politicians’ preferences about electoral systems reflect interests alone (for example Reed and Thies 2001; Pekkanen et al. 2006, 183-4). This assumption is easier to test, and may well be the dominant explanation in practice (see for example Benoit and Schiemann 2001, 156-7; Bawn 2003). But while interests and attitudes often coincide (Geddes 1996, 18), they do not always do so: in post-Communist Europe, for example, electoral system choices were also influenced by beliefs about legitimacy

and other collective goods, which did not entirely match interest-based preferences (Birch et al. 2002, 171-2, 178-9, 183-5).

I thus treat an attitudinal preference as a preference based on what an individual believes is good, independently of how she thinks the policy affects her interests. An interest-based preference is based on how she thinks it affects her interests, independently of her attitudes. Two types of interest are especially important: self-interest and party-interest. A self-interested preference is based on what an individual thinks would benefit her, a party-based preference is based on what she thinks would benefit her party. Dispositions involve characteristics such as risk-aversion, idealism, and willingness to compromise (Brennan and Hamlin 2004, 2006). Attitudes, interests and dispositions may be difficult to untangle in practice, of course.

Finally, support for electoral reform can be outcome-based and act-based, and the outcome/act distinction may involve interests and attitudes. An example of an outcome-based interest is an MP who votes for electoral reform because the new electoral system would benefit her party. Here, it is the outcomes of the electoral system that matter. An example of an act-based interest is an MP who votes for electoral reform to avoid being punished by party leaders or constituency members. Here, it is the very act of supporting/opposing the reform, not the outcome of the reform, which matters. An example of outcome-based attitude is an MP who votes for electoral reform because she believes that the new electoral system would be more equitable. An example of an act-based attitude is an MP who votes for electoral reform because she feels a duty to support her party leaders. The outcome/act distinction follows Reed and Thies's (2001) distinction between outcome-contingency and act-contingency – a useful distinction which shows that support for or against electoral reform may have nothing to do with the proposed electoral system itself. But I have dropped Reed and Thies's reference to contingency and their implication that only interests are relevant.

## **2. Multi-party competition?**

Supporters of SMP often praise two-party competition for single-party government, which they hold to be accountable, stable and efficient. It is now widely accepted that this model applied best, though still imperfectly, between about 1945 and 1970, and much less well before and after these dates (for example, Dunleavy 2002, 133).

Figure 1 illustrates this by quantifying Laakso and Taagepera's (1979) effective number of parties index at four scales: votes (NV), seats (NS), legislative power (NL) and cabinet power (NC) (see Blau 2005; Blau 2006).<sup>1</sup> Since 1974, in effect there have been on average about three parties in votes, two in seats, one-and-a-half in legislative power, and one in executive power. Quantifying UK politics at these four scales tells us far more about party politics in Westminster elections and parliaments than insisting that the high effective number of parties in votes makes the UK a multi-party system (Dunleavy 2005), or that Conservative and Labour domination in seats makes the UK a two-party system (Lijphart 1999, 75).

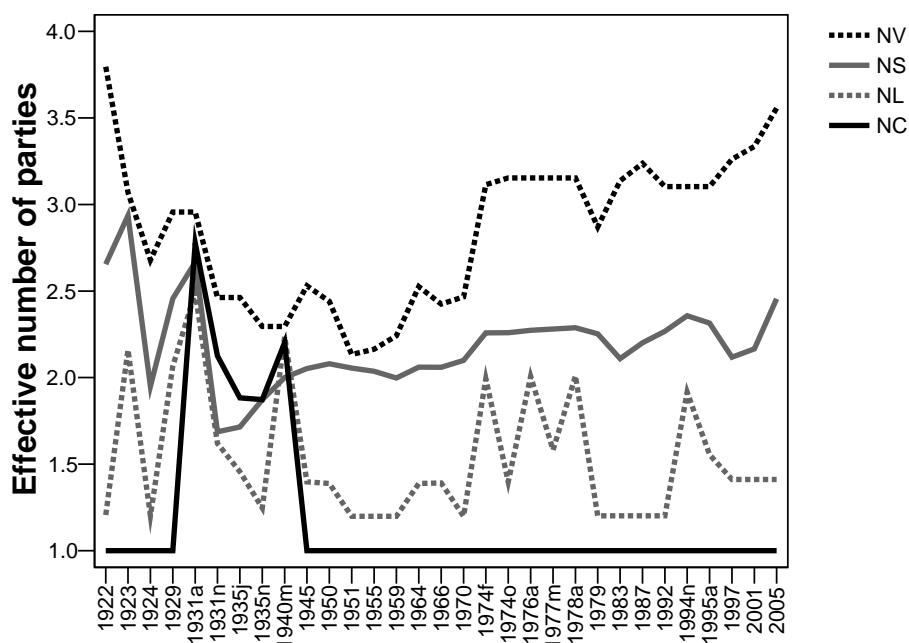


Figure 1: Multi-party competition in the UK?

<sup>1</sup> NL and NC are calculated using estimated party shares of legislative and cabinet power. For legislative power, I first estimate government and opposition influence using Powell's (2000, 103-6) method, and then divide these figures between government and opposition parties (respectively) in accordance with their seat shares. For cabinet power, I use each party's share of cabinet portfolios. I have added extra datapoints for significant changes of legislative or cabinet status. For more details, see Blau (2005; 2006).

I have not used power indices, despite their apparent objectivity. Power indices provide *a priori* estimates of power as allocated by formal constitutional rules, but in this context we ideally want estimates of parties' actual power, formal and informal. That requires qualitative judgements about how to deal with coalition/supporting parties and variables such as how much influence opposition parties have when they control the upper house (since power indices would only address one chamber). Power indices would also suggest that majority governments always get their way even though British majority governments only pass 97% of their legislation (Powell 2001, 4-7). Dumont and Caullier's (2005) innovative use of power indices to estimate 'the effective number of relevant parties' thus primarily focuses on government formation and says less about the legislative situation in the years that follow. Power indices are often useful (see for example McLean et al. 2005) but their applicability in the current context should not be overstated. My estimates of NL are, of course, not the final answer; but for now they probably provide a more plausible indication of the actual dispersal of legislative power than a simple power-index approach.

Clearly, legislative and cabinet power were spread quite widely in the pre-war period. Single-party cabinets have existed since 1945, but since the 1970s legislative power has often been distributed more widely than the majoritarian ideal – a common situation in majoritarian systems (Powell 2000).

What do these indices imply about the prospects for electoral reform? One approach is to focus on NV. Colomer (2005) shows that shifts from majoritarian to proportional electoral systems are more likely the higher the value of NV. But Colomer's hypothesized mechanism is unclear. He talks variously about decreases in incumbent parties' vote-shares, wasted votes, voter dissatisfaction with the electoral system, under-represented parties pushing for change, and extra-institutional pressures and actions (Colomer 2005, 8-11). The first factor could conceivably cause the second, the second could cause the third, and so on; but each connection is far from certain. Moreover, none of these proposed mechanisms are actually tested in Colomer's statistical analysis, where NV is the only independent variable. If wasted votes and voter dissatisfaction were the key, then disproportionality indices should be included. If under-represented minor parties are the key, then Colomer should be examining indices such as the difference between NV and NS or the mean under-representation of under-represented parties. If under-represented major parties are the key, then their changing seat-share or decreasing over-representation should be included. Meanwhile, if a major party is losing votes but not seats, it may have no incentive to change to PR.

NV has no direct relation to any of these mechanisms. It may be 'a proxy for the threat suffered by the incumbent parties and the support for electoral system change' (Colomer 2005, 8-11), but NS is a better proxy. If NV is statistically significant in Colomer's regressions, this is probably because it is correlated with NS. Overall, NV cannot itself be a very good explanation of electoral reform, and while Colomer rightly shows that multipartism can precede PR, his analysis does not give a mechanism.

### **3. Four developments in the UK**

Compared to Colomer's large-N comparative study, this paper's single-country focus allows a more precise focus on the translation of votes to seat, and the translation of seats to power. Four interrelated developments have weakened SMP to the point where reform of the Westminster electoral system is possible, though still unlikely.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The following section is partly a summary and update of Blau (2004).

The first reason is a decline of ‘responsiveness’ (also called ‘exaggeration’ or the ‘winner’s bonus’). Early postwar elections saw a responsiveness index of 3 – the cube law. In its simplest terms, a cube law means that in two-party contests, a party with 51 percent of the vote would win 53 percent of the seats. A higher responsiveness index means that small victories in votes enable secure legislative majorities.

The index of responsiveness depends on the relative proportions of marginal and safe seats. As the proportion of marginals has declined, the responsiveness index, estimated using the integrated method (Blau 2004), fell to a low of around 1.6 in the 1980s, rising to about 2 in recent elections (Table 1, Column 1).

**Table 1: Three aspects of the decline of SMP in the UK**

<b>Election</b>	<b>(1) responsiveness index</b>	<b>(2) minor-party seats (%)</b>	<b>(3) partisan bias (seats)</b>
<b>1955</b>	2.9	1	16 to Con
<b>1959</b>	2.8	1	19 to Con
<b>1964</b>	2.7	1	1 to Lab
<b>1966</b>	2.7	2	16 to Con
<b>1970</b>	2.7	2	8 to Lab
<b>1974f</b>	2.3	6	13 to Lab
<b>1974o</b>	2.1	6	13 to Con
<b>1979</b>	2.1	4	42 to Lab
<b>1983</b>	1.7	7	46 to Lab
<b>1987</b>	1.6	7	13 to Lab
<b>1992</b>	1.7	7	46 to Lab
<b>1997</b>	2.0	12	59 to Lab
<b>2001</b>	2.0	12	80 to Lab
<b>2005</b>	2.0*	14	104 to Lab*

\* provisional estimate. Responsiveness index and bias: major-party seats in Britain only, Speaker and uncontested seats by at least one major party were excluded. Negative bias indicates bias to Labour, positive bias indicates bias to Conservatives. The starting point, 1955, is the first election after the redistricting of constituency boundaries earlier that year, and the beginning of the cube law’s decay.

The second reason why SMP has weakened in the UK is the rise in minor-party seats. In 1955, minor parties won 1 percent of the seats; in 2005 they won 14 percent (Table 1, Column 2). Where minor parties win no seats, only a tied election would leave us without a majority party. But as minor parties now hold one in seven Commons seats, hung parliaments are far likelier, and the winning party is less likely to take a secure majority of seats. Especially important are the October 1974 and 1992 elections, where the Labour and Conservative governments struggled to control their initial majorities of 4 and 21 seats, respectively; both eventually became minority governments. Along with the February to October 1974 parliament, where no party had an overall majority, a third of the time since 1974 has been spent with small or absent majorities

and minor-party influence – a surprisingly large figure for those who believe that SMP elections guarantee strong majority government.

Most British political scientists still talk as if the cube law’s decline is the main cause of this situation (for example Curtice et al. 2005, 251-2, 258). But a simple sensitivity analysis shows that the rise of minor parties is now much more important (Blau 2004, 437). *Very* roughly, the likelihood of a hung parliament or a small government majority can be estimated in the following way (Blau 2004, 435-8, 448-51):

$$f = \frac{8\left(\left(\frac{R}{T-m}\right) - 0.5\right)}{k} \quad (1)$$

or in English:

$$\text{probability of failure} = \frac{8\left(\left(\frac{\text{required number of seats}}{\text{total number of seats} - \text{number of minor party seats}}\right) - 0.5\right)}{\text{responsiveness index}}$$

The third reason why SMP has weakened in the UK is that not only are hung parliaments and small majorities likelier than before, but small majorities are now more dangerous because governing parties have become less cohesive. The less cohesive the governing party, the greater the majority needed for stable government — and the more dangerous the electoral system’s declining ability to facilitate secure majorities becomes. Government backbenchers have indeed rebelled more often since 1970, for many reasons (Cowley 2002). (For some examples of how this has affected governments with low majorities before and after 1970, see Blau 2004, 438-40.)

This further highlights first-past-the-post’s contingency on external factors. Accountable, stable, secure, single-party government depends on the translation of votes to seats *and* the translation of seats to power. The translation of votes to seats is contingent on the number and strength of parties, electoral geography and electoral behaviour; the translation of seats to power is contingent on legislative behaviour. Changes in the former have made small majorities more likely; changes in the latter have made small majorities more hazardous. In effect, the Commons majority necessary for stable and productive government has increased.

The fourth reason for the decline of SMP is a very large pro-Labour ‘partisan bias’ (henceforth ‘bias’). Bias involves an advantage to one major party over the other, adding to or

subtracting from the amount of responsiveness. So in a two-party election with an unbiased cube law, a party with 51 percent of the seats would win 53 percent of the seats; if there is a 1-point bias in its favour, the party would instead win 54 percent of the seats.

Most British analysts still calculate bias using the outmoded ‘uniform swing’ method. This involves applying the same change in vote-share from one major party to the other in all constituencies until both parties have the same number of votes nationally (Butler 1951). If one party would then win more seats than the other, there is a bias in its favour. This method has been strongly criticised, especially in American circles, although not all criticisms are valid (see Blau 2002, chapter 6; Blau 2001). But uniform swing’s adherents have not adequately addressed the fact that the bias which they are using uniform swing to measure is primarily caused by *non*-uniform swing. Worse, uniform swing only tells us about bias under hypothetical conditions. Even if uniform swing were a very accurate predictor in reality, which it is not, we still need information about what *actually* happened. Yet uniform swing itself tells us that what is an efficient distribution at one vote share will become inefficient at others, so under certain conditions the bias we actually see would differ from the bias at hypothetical vote shares (Blau 2001).

Even so, uniform swing would still give better estimates of bias than some of the American alternatives. Multi-election regression of votes and seats (King and Browning 1987) can produce strikingly unreliable estimates if bias changes over time, even when statistical tests imply that the results are robust (Blau, n.d.). Single-election methods have fared little better. Gelman and King (1994) only measure bias arising from the distribution of votes and not from differential seat size; so their estimates are systematically biased towards the Republicans (Grofman, Koetzle and Brunell (1997, 464). Grofman et al. use the Gelman–King method to calculate distribution bias, and variants of Soper and Rydon’s (1958) method for size bias, but they calculate turnout bias incorrectly, and in any case the Soper–Rydon method implicitly assumes uniform swing (Blau 2002, 230, 233). Campbell (1996) laudably seeks to measure bias not only under hypothetical conditions but also at actual election results, but his methods are theoretically invalid and can produce empirically implausible results (Blau 2002, 236-43). To date, the only successful attempt to estimate bias at actual results is the integrated method (Blau 2004). This method is imperfect but it is the best we have for now.

Whereas uniform swing indicates a hypothetical bias to Labour since 1992, the integrated method suggests that Labour has actually been advantaged at every election from 1970, and at nine of the last ten elections (Table 1, Column 3). Aside from giving Labour an unexpected victory in February 1974, the political impact of bias has mostly been since 1992. It is the main

reason why the Conservatives' 7.5-percentage point lead in votes in 1992 only gave a 21-seat Commons majority, while Labour's 9-point lead in 2001 gave a 167-seat majority. In 2005, there would have been a hung parliament without bias, if such a counterfactual is possible; in reality Labour's 3-point lead in votes still produced a 65-seat overall majority, and 158 more Labour than Conservative seats. Labour's vote could well drop further, and aside from equation 1's insights about hung parliaments being likely sooner or later, simple simulations show a real risk of a hung parliament at the next election, maybe even with the Conservatives ahead of Labour in votes but not seats (Curtice et al. 2005, 251-3; Whiteley 2005).

In an earlier paper I suggested that under such a scenario pressure for electoral reform 'might ... be hard to resist' (Blau 2004, 445-6). Notwithstanding the weasel word 'might', this wrongly implies that electoral reform is a likely way out of a hung parliament. The Liberals failed to enforce electoral reform in February 1974, when they did not have the balance of power. They failed again between 1976 and 1979 when they did hold the balance of power (along with other parties, admittedly); all that they could achieve was an 18-month pact which gave them little influence. Nor did the inconclusive multi-party elections of the 1930s lead to electoral reform, although the minority Labour government did pass AV in 1931, under Liberal pressure, before the House of Lords vetoed.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, a single hung parliament may not be very damaging. Two hung parliaments in a row might be more problematic.<sup>4</sup> But even here a major party could dismiss calls for change, as we will see. One reason involves a second error: I overstated the danger of bias. While I was right to identify pro-Labour bias as a problem for SMP, I was wrong not to see the other side of bias: *it gives Labour an incentive not to reform* and may thus make change less not more likely, at least under certain conditions.

Nor must irresistible pressure for change arise from reverse pluralities, where the party with most votes finishes second in seats. After New Zealand's National party won the 1978 and 1981 general elections despite coming second in votes, Labour won power in 1984 with a manifesto commitment to review the electoral system. This led to a Royal Commission but no more, and without some rather chancy act-based manoeuvring in the 1987 campaign, reform might not have stayed on the agenda (Denemark 2001, 85-8).

<sup>3</sup> I thank Kevin Morgan for advising me to address these historical parallels.

<sup>4</sup> I thank Alan Ware for suggesting this in 2001, although I took four years to understand this: see Blau (2002, 349-50), where in retrospect I clearly miss Ware's point.

I must thus make more precise the claim that popular and media uproar about the electoral system ‘*might* impel the Conservative and/or Labour party leaders to choose electoral reform’ (Blau 2004, 447; emphasis added). To do that we need to turn from the particularities of British electoral politics to a broader theoretical framework.

#### **4. Electoral reform as a veto game**

Electoral reform can be interpreted as a veto game. A veto game has one or more veto players and one or more agenda-setters. A veto player has negative power, the power to say no – here, the power to stop an electoral reform bill from becoming law. An agenda-setter has the positive power to push a proposal to a final vote on the floor of the legislature. Here, the agenda-setter is the leadership of the largest Commons party, which controls the legislative agenda; below this is usually assumed to be the Labour leadership.

Rational agenda-setters should keep other veto players in mind. This may mean non-decision-making: if the agenda-setter’s preferred policy will fail she may not propose it at all. Veto power can also turn into positive influence: the agenda-setter spots that her proposed policy is unacceptable to a veto player and produces a compromise. These examples of ‘backwards induction’ – the agenda-setter reasoning from what the veto player would accept to what should thus be proposed – means that the power to say no can shape the agenda even before proposals are made. Of course, for rational and non-rational reasons, agenda-setters may not act as above.

In the UK, the most likely veto points are the Commons, the Lords and a referendum. A Lords veto is unlikely. This is partly because the Liberal Democrats, who most strongly favour electoral reform in the UK, are now pivotal in most Lords votes (Russell and Sciara 2006), although this might change with further Lords reform. More importantly, the Commons usually wins bicameral disagreements, although peers’ veto power increases in the last year of a parliament when the temporary veto becomes absolute (and when an unpopular government might be most tempted to change electoral systems). A Lords veto is likeliest if a highly partisan reform proposal offends the democratic sensibilities of enough peers, including peers who would not normally vote. But overall, a Commons or referendum veto is more likely.

There is no certainty that a referendum would pass, although analysis of focus groups suggests increased support for moderately proportional reforms once citizens are more informed about electoral systems (Farrell and Gallagher 1999). A referendum might well reject a highly partisan reform proposal (as in Ireland in 1959 and 1969 when Fianna Fáil tried to change STV

to SMP), especially if the party/parties favoured are currently unpopular in opinion polls. A referendum could also veto an electoral reform bill foisted onto an unwilling major party by a minor party – probably the Liberal Democrats – in a hung parliament. That would give opponents of electoral reform much ammunition about minor parties getting excessive influence.<sup>5</sup>

Rational agenda-setters should avoid the above actions or avoid a referendum. Since 1997, referendums have been seen as obligatory on major shifts of power, like devolution, but there was no referendum on the Human Rights Act 1998 and a government might treat electoral reform similarly. The two types of risky electoral reform just described would then be easier to pass.

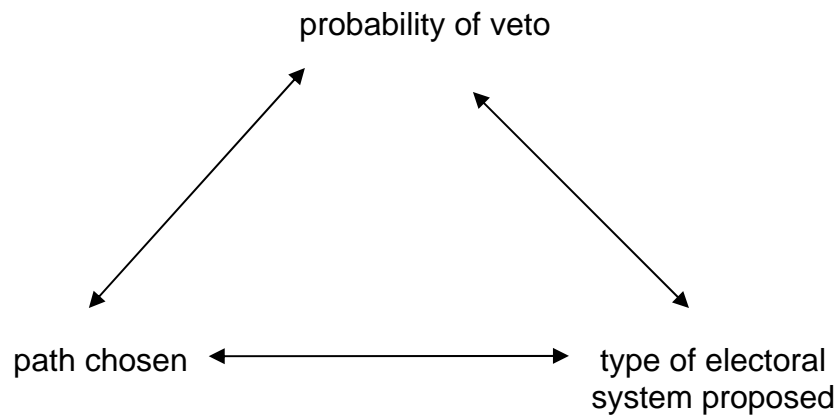
This highlights an important agenda-setting power which has not, to my knowledge, been adequately addressed by veto player theorists: the agenda-setter may also have ‘path-setting’ powers. The agenda-setter can choose not only what proposals to place on or off the agenda and in what order proposals should be addressed (Cox and McCubbins 2005) but also what *political/legislative path* these proposals should take. Here, the agenda-setter can pick between several routes for an electoral reform proposal, and the precise route taken may affect the likelihood of veto. This makes electoral reform path-dependent in that its success may depend on the political path taken.<sup>6</sup> As far as I know, path-setting is not explicit in the veto-player literature, although it is implicit (see Cox and McCubbins 2005, ch. 2 section 7.2, ch. 4?? section 4) and is to some extent recognised by Schattschneider (1960). To extend Cox and McCubbins’s (2005, ch. 11 section 7) analogy, the agenda-setter controls not only ‘the brake and the steering’ but also the car’s route.

Importantly, the probability of veto interacts with the likelihood of the particular path being taken and the type of electoral reform proposed (Figure 2). If a veto is very likely on one path, a different electoral reform may be proposed or a different path taken. The path also affects the likelihood of veto and the type of electoral system that may be accepted, just as the type of electoral system proposed affects the likelihood of veto and influences the path to be taken:

<sup>5</sup> I thank Lewis Baston for pointing out this scenario to me.

<sup>6</sup> This is a subset of Pierson’s (2002, 252) broader notion of path-dependence, ‘the causal relevance of preceding stages in a temporal sequence’, not the narrower notion, based on increasing returns. The notion which I describe is more useful than the inchoate and bland version that Pierson rightly criticises.

Figure 2:



In the UK, there are nine likely paths – nine different veto games:

1. **Parliament then referendum.** An electoral reform bill is placed before Parliament and then, if successful, put to a referendum.
2. **Parliament only.** Given the possibility of a referendum veto, the government might not call a referendum at all.
3. **Referendum then Parliament.** The government could effectively sidestep the Commons by calling a referendum first, as in New Zealand. This might help to pass an electoral reform that was not popular with backbenchers. (In Italy, the referendum was called by a different agenda-setter – see Donovan 1995, 53-6 – but there is no such provision in the UK.) Thus Dunleavy and Margetts (2001, 317) see a referendum as the most likely way to get electoral reform if the public could ‘bind reluctant MPs to accept a radical change of Westminster elections.’ Note that this type of veto game differs from Tsebelis’s (2002, ch. 5) account of legally binding referendums: British referendums are only indicative. In effect, a negative referendum would stop a proposal, but a positive referendum would not make it law. A positive referendum would, however, strongly pressure backbenchers to vote in favour.
4. **Citizens’ Assembly then Parliament then Referendum.** A government could also sidestep partisan controversy by setting up a Citizens’ Assembly, whose democratic credentials may make a Commons veto less likely. But assemblies may produce electoral systems which the government may not like. For example, the Citizens’ Assembly in British Columbia chose STV, which is more anti-party than British governments would like. (Note

that the British Columbia model did not have a parliamentary stage.) A British government might thus constrain an assembly's choice, for example telling them to choose SMP or MMS. This weakens the assembly's democratic credentials, making a Commons or referendum veto more likely if enough MPs or citizens see the process as a sham. The Citizens' Assembly path is thus tricky.

5. **Citizens' Assembly then Referendum then Parliament.** This reverses the last two stages of option 4 and thus makes a Commons veto even less likely.
6. **Citizens' Assembly then Parliament.** This is the same as options 4 and 5 but without a referendum, as in the Dutch model.
7. **Commission then Parliament then Referendum.** This is the same as option 4 but replaces the Citizens' Assembly with a commission, as in the older Royal Commission model used in the UK in 1976, an Independent Commission used in 1998, or even the Electoral Commission. An independent commission is most likely as it is easier for the government to influence, as in 1998 (Dunleavy and Margetts...). Commissions make the ensuing bill look less like a government proposal, but sensible commissioners are likely to produce something that would be palatable to the government.
8. **Commission then Referendum then Parliament.** This reverses the last two stages of option 7 and makes a Commons veto even less likely.
9. **Commission then Parliament.** This is the same as options 7 and 8 but without a referendum.

Note that the agenda-setter's choice may be constrained: for example a minor party might try to insist on a Citizens' Assembly model as part of any deal.

The wide range of paths gives the government greater flexibility than standard accounts of electoral reform imply. For example, the Commons is in effect treated as the only veto game in town by the one study which, to my knowledge, explicitly discusses UK electoral reform in veto-player terms (Dunleavy and Margetts 1995, 17-23). Recently, however, the Citizens' Assembly model has changed the structure of the game: its non-partisan approach may help the government sidestep the Commons (if it wished) and could also prove useful in a partisan deadlock.

Nonetheless, the nine veto games all involve Parliament, as parliamentary statutes are required for these changes, and referendums have no constitutional status in the UK. As the primary veto point in Parliament is the Commons, a government considering electoral reform must therefore assess the Commons' position. If a Commons veto is likely, the government may

not propose a bill (non-decision-making) or may take a path with less chance of a Commons veto, as in paths 3 to 6 or 8 – though angry government backbenchers might then withdraw support from the government’s other legislation. So, the fundamental issue for the agenda-setter to address is whether any alternative electoral system could get majority support in the House of Commons.

## **5. Outcome-based self-interest: incumbency protection**

We do not know exactly how many MPs support electoral reform and for what reasons. We do know that a more proportional system is supported by all Liberal Democrats and, we can assume, most other minor-party MPs, for attitudinal and especially party-interest reasons. The DUP are currently over-represented in Northern Ireland and may vote against reform, but that leaves about 85 MPs at the moment (or 80 if we exclude Sinn Féin), of whom 63 are currently Liberal Democrats. We know, too, that very few Conservative MPs support electoral reform, for attitudinal and interest-based reasons. And it is estimated that the 353 Labour MPs are split roughly into a third who support a more proportional system, a third who oppose it, and a third who are undecided.<sup>7</sup> To pass a 324-seat winning hurdle in the Commons, about two-thirds of current Labour MPs must vote for reform.

We do not know how many Labour MPs would back electoral reform if pressured. Two kinds of act-based reasons, which could rest on attitudes and/or interests (see section 1), are relevant here. MPs might be influenced by their constituents or constituency parties; but as this kind of principal–agent linkage is weak in the UK, MPs are more likely to be pressured by party leaders. But that may still fail if MPs reason that voting for electoral reform would lead to them losing their seat entirely in a few years.

For the most part, then, outcome-based reasons will be crucial. In this section I consider outcome-based self-interest: could the agenda-setter find an alternative electoral system that would not threaten MPs’ seats? This is widely seen as a fundamental obstacle to reform.

In fact incumbency is not so problematic. Two types of electoral system can avoid threatening incumbency for a majority of MPs. First, we can keep existing seats but introduce preferential voting, probably the Alternative Vote (AV). This is equivalent to the Single Transferable Vote (STV) in single-member constituencies, and is used in elections to the

<sup>7</sup> I thank Mary Southcott, the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform’s parliamentary officer, and Malcolm Clark, for this information about Labour MPs.

Australian lower chamber. Under AV, citizens rank each candidate in order of preference. If no candidate has a majority of first preferences, the bottom-ranked candidate is eliminated and her preferences are reallocated. This continues until one party has a majority. One variant is the Supplementary Vote (SV), used for electing several English mayors including the London mayor. SV gives voters two preferences only. I will henceforth talk about AV, which translates votes to seats very similarly to SV (Dunleavy and Margetts 2001), but SV might be chosen as it is slightly more restrictive to new parties in terms of the psychological factor of turning support into votes.

To understand why AV would be acceptable to a majority of incumbency-focused MPs, we must understand a crucially important if somewhat surprising conclusion: *we have already seen the partial development of AV*, not by institutional reform but by the behaviour of voters and parties under SMP. Especially in the February 1974 and 1997-2005 elections, many anti-Conservative voters picked whichever candidate was best placed to beat the Conservatives. This approaches AV, where Liberal Democrat supporters in Con/Lab marginals could rank a Liberal Democrat candidate first, Labour second and the Conservatives third, with Labour receiving the vote when the Liberal Democrat is eliminated. Tactical voting under SMP shortcuts this process and gives the same end product, with Labour receiving the vote straight away. This also applies for Labour supporters in Con-LD marginals who often vote tactically for Liberal Democrat candidates. This development is less widespread under SMP than AV but it is discernible. In effect, electoral behaviour, catalysed by the behaviour of political parties, is mimicking the effect of an institutional reform.

AV might be vetoed in the Lords. Unless enough peers were swayed by constituency-scale voter choice and the avoidance of MPs elected with under 50 percent of the vote, AV's anti-Conservative potential could offend the democratic sensibilities of many peers, as noted earlier. That would mean a government may avoid AV in the last year of a parliament, when the Lords veto is absolute. But AV's anti-Conservative potential certainly makes a Commons majority possible as AV would not threaten the position of most Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs – although Baston (2005, 57) estimates that eight Labour seats would have been won by Liberal Democrats in 2005 under AV, so a few Labour MPs might thus fear being ousted.

The main challenge to AV in the Commons is fear of 'tactical unwind'. Anti-Conservative tactical voting since 1997 has rested on a dislike of the Conservatives by voters who not only like both Labour and the Liberal Democrats but who also perceive the two parties to be ideologically similar. However, fewer Labour and Liberal Democrat supporters were as strongly opposed to the Conservatives in 2005, causing a slight drop in anti-Conservative tactical voting (Fisher and Curtice, 2006). AV might potentially threaten more Labour seats if enough

Liberal Democrat supporters come to dislike Labour more. Commons opposition to AV might thus increase.

This calculation is less relevant in the second type of reform which does not threaten self-interest, a form of Mixed-Member System (MMS). (In the UK, MMS is often called the Additional Member System or AMS.) Under MMS, part of the legislature is elected in single-member districts and part is elected at a second tier with higher district magnitude.

MMS systems have previously been thought to fit into the turkeys-voting-for-Christmas category. Even replacing 150 SMP seats with a second tier of the same size would disrupt all other MPs since each remaining SMP seat would have to be made 25 percent bigger. My solution is thus to add the extra tier on top of existing MPs *without reducing the number of MPs elected in single-member districts*. For example, one could keep the existing 646 SMP seats and add 100 to 150 top-up seats, constituting 13 to 19 percent of a chamber with about 750 to 800 MPs. The advantage is that no incumbent need lose her seat. We can call this ‘super-sized MMS’.

The obvious defect of super-sized MMS would be a large number of MPs in a chamber which is already unusually large (Taagepera and Shugart 1989, 175). Many onlookers already want to cut MPs: the 2005 Conservative manifesto even had a commitment to reduce the Commons by 20 percent. (That would be even harder to get through the Commons than an electoral reform bill, of course.) Opponents of electoral reform, and sceptical journalists and citizens, would certainly attack moves to expand the house. Anticipating derision, potential reformers would either avoid a referendum and adopt a path involving Parliament only, or more likely they would simply reject this option out of hand, for fear of losing votes and seats.

Super-sized MMS is thus unlikely. But it is not implausible. A government might decide that the chance of continued office was worth risking loss of votes. Reformers could defend themselves by pledging to cut seats in the future, for example removing 40 single-member districts whenever boundaries are redrawn every 10-15 years – a rate of change that should not worry incumbents overly. A bill could explicitly aim for a 450-seat legislature with a third of MPs elected in second-tier seats, say.

Positive arguments should also be presented. With more MPs, constituents would be better represented, both in principal–agent terms and as regards proportionality between votes and seats; for example, this would improve representation for citizens in ‘electoral deserts’, such as the Labour-dominated inner cities and Conservative-dominated rural areas. (Note that unlike much veto player theory, I am assuming that preferences are not fixed: here, some citizens might change their minds about whether a super-sized chamber is bad.) Nonetheless, reformers should be honest and admit that a larger chamber is primarily a compromise to get backbench support.

On the assumption that super-sized MMS is at least a possibility, I will continue to discuss it in this paper. It would be easy to introduce, at relatively short notice, as is AV. Neither system is radical enough to require referendums, indeed a referendum may not be advisable for super-sized MMS. So, two types of electoral reform would not threaten the incumbency-based self-interest of a majority of MPs. I therefore turn to a second obstacle to electoral reform: attitudes.

## 6. Outcome-based attitudes

Although the Liberal Democrats would not favour AV on attitudinal grounds, due to its potential for disproportionality, this attitude is surely not strong enough to trump the Liberal Democrats' interest in winning more seats than under SMP (see Dunleavy and Margetts 1995, 23). The bigger challenge is from Labour MPs who want greater proportionality and might reject AV as it can be less proportional than SMP.

This means, importantly, that AV might be easier to pass *before* a hung parliament than after. If all 85 minor-party MPs mentioned in section 5 were to vote for AV, it would take about two-thirds of Labour's current 353 MPs to ensure a majority. If Labour were to lose at least 30 MPs, producing a hung parliament, then three-quarters of Labour MPs would be needed, and if Labour fell to 260 MPs such that along with 63 Liberal Democrats MPs they could barely garner a majority in the Commons, then nine in ten Labour MPs would have to vote in favour. Therefore, as Labour's majority shrinks, the probability increases that attitudinal adherents of proportional systems would scupper AV.

Super-sized MMS, by contrast, would be more proportional, although the second tier would be too small (at 13 to 19 percent of the chamber) to remove all of the disproportionality seen in recent general elections. On attitudinal grounds, Labour MPs who favour PR could probably accept a moderately proportional reform. Again, though, it may be easier to introduce MMS before rather than after a hung parliament, because some Labour MPs may think it wrong to be increasing the size of the Commons, and because of Labour's attitudinal *opponents* of electoral reform. We do not know how many MPs fear electoral reform because they believe – mistakenly, as we have seen – that it would lose them their seats. I suspect that many opponents or doubters could back reforms which do not threaten incumbency. But many opponents would doubtless remain. Some Labour MPs, for example, still begrudge the Liberal Democrats for the Labour/SDP split in the early 1980s, which (in their eyes) condemned the left to opposition.

Reforms which help the Liberal Democrats may be resisted by these MPs. In political science terms, then, the winset for super-sized MMS, like AV, should be wider before a hung parliament. The problem with pre-emptive reform is that party leaders may not look ahead, may remain optimistic about the results of the next election, or may find it hard to convince backbenchers to support such a move in advance.

## 7. Party-interest: seats, policy and office

The next two sections ask whether the major parties would benefit from electoral reform. Party-interest primarily involves the self-interest of party leaders (most of whom are MPs), because parties' main interests are in maximising seats, office and policy influence, and party leaders benefit most here. Party-interest also influences backbench MPs who are concerned not just with protecting incumbency but also with whether a reform would help their party. This is not purely self-interested: many MPs feel strong 'tribal' loyalties to their party. Clearly, party-interest has self-interested and attitudinal *roots* but it makes sense to talk about party-interest as in effect a separate category of interests.

Without tactical unwind, Conservatives could not accept AV. Indeed, with the current party system the Conservatives should avoid all electoral reforms. Bale (2006) has given several reasons why the Conservatives should change the electoral system, including an act-based party-interest reason: reform would convince sceptical citizens that the Conservatives are a modern, democratic party. Less convincing are Bale's arguments based on anti-Conservative bias (see section 3). Bale's account of bias assumes uniform swing, yet non-uniform swings may well reduce this bias if the Conservatives recover (Blau 2004, 445). More importantly, despite the cube law's decline the Conservatives could expect a roughly 2-point lead over Labour in seats for every 1-point lead in the two-party vote – greater over-representation than more proportional systems would offer. Bale thus makes a false inference from the Conservatives' current disadvantage to their future situation. In terms of seats, a resurgent Conservative party would benefit more from biased SMP than from unbiased or less biased alternatives. The Conservatives should only consider reform if they keep winning under 35 percent of the vote and do not look like taking power on their own, in which case coalitions may be needed; but even here SMP-based coalitions may still be preferable, as section 8 discusses.

Whether AV is in Labour's interests depends on the extent of 'tactical unwind', i.e. decreasing anti-Conservative tactical voting (Fisher and Curtice 2006). In 2005 Labour's majority might have been 20 to 30 seats larger under AV (Baston 2005, 42; Curtice 2005). But fear of

tactical unwind narrows the likelihood of introducing AV. With Labour struggling in the opinion polls, the winset for AV may now be closed. Although at least one senior Labour figure recommended AV before the 2005 election (Hain 2004), the leadership did not make a move and it may now be too late. Note, again, that the Lords or a referendum might veto a partisan reform like AV.

Under super-sized MMS, the lower tier of single-member districts could see election by different formulas, including plurality and preferential voting. Without significant tactical unwind, lower-tier AV would disadvantage the Conservatives more than lower-tier SMP, and while this extra bias may not be fully removed given the relatively small percentages of second-tier seats that are being considered here, super-sized MMS with lower-tier AV is unlikely to look so partisan as to arouse strong reactions from the Lords.

The second tier is more significant. MMS can be either mixed-member proportional (MMP) or mixed-member majoritarian (MMM), depending on whether the second-tier seats are compensatory/linked or supplementary/parallel (Shugart and Wattenberg 2001, 13-18). Under MMP, second-tier seats are linked to first-tier seats, compensating for disproportionality in first-tier seats. If a party were under-represented in the first tier, it would be given second-tier seats to remove or at least reduce this under-representation; the greater the proportion of second-tier seats in the legislature, the greater the overall proportionality. Two different estimates of the 2005 election suggest that with AV in the first tier and about 17 percent of second-tier seats, Labour would have won about 48 percent of the seats (down from 55 percent at the actual election), the Conservatives 30 percent (down from 30 percent), and the Liberal Democrats 17 percent, up from 10 percent (Dunleavy and Margetts 2005, 864-6; Baston 2005, 43-4, 57-8). This would primarily boost the Liberal Democrats at Labour's expense.

Under MMM, second-tier seats are simply added on top of first-tier ones without attempting to compensate for first-tier disproportionalities. How MMM works depends partly on whether second-tier seats are added according to the same vote as the first tier or on the basis of a separate vote. In 2005, super-sized MMM with 150 second-tier seats allocated proportionately on the basis of first-tier votes would have given Labour 51 percent of the seats, the Conservatives 31 percent, and the Liberal Democrats 12 percent (assuming no change in first-tier votes, which is of course unlikely). This would hardly affect the actual 2005 result, even with AV in lower-tier seats, so there would be little point in any party advocating this model. If second-tier seats were instead allocated on the basis of a separate vote, parties like the Liberal Democrats, who suffer from the psychological factor in SMD constituencies, would benefit. The

Liberal Democrats would probably win several percentage points more seats, mostly from Labour, but the effect would not be as strong as the MMP system just described.

These estimates are of course hugely problematic. For example, MMS might let new parties win seats. A Socialist party is unlikely to pass a 5 percent threshold but the Greens might, primarily hurting Labour and the Liberal Democrats, as might the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the far-right British National Party (BNP), mainly hurting the Conservatives (see John et al. 2006). This could affect party-interest calculations, for example if Labour believed that they would suffer less than the Conservatives not only in seats but also coalition-potential (assuming that the Conservatives could not form a coalition with UKIP or the BNP whereas a Labour-led coalition could include the Greens). Overall, though, the threshold would probably be high enough not to affect the major parties much; thus Dunleavy and Margetts's (2005, 865) simulations of MMP in 2005 would have given three seats to the Greens and one to the BNP (assuming AV lower-tier seats and 17 percent top-up).

So, my highly provisional estimates of super-sized MMS suggests that unlike AV, Labour would lose several percentage points in seats to the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives would not be much affected. If the Liberal Democrats insisted on super-sized MMS as part of a coalition deal, Labour *might* be willing to accept this despite sacrificing seats, for two reasons. First, policy-maximising: an oversized Labour–LibDem coalition might give Labour more policy influence than a small majority which gives blackmail potential to left-wing Labour backbenchers. After all, in Scotland since devolution in 1999, the Labour–LibDem coalitions have mainly enacted Labour legislation, with exceptions such as university fees in the first coalition and STV for local government in the second. This latter example is especially pertinent as it appears that the Liberal Democrats forewent much of their policy agenda to get local electoral reform accepted. The same could well apply to the initial Labour–LibDem coalition at Westminster.

Second, and more likely, office-maximising: a minimal winning Labour–LibDem coalition might enable Labour to maintain power if it fell short of an overall majority. As Bawn (1993, 968) notes, electoral reform ‘may increase a party’s seat share but damage its chance of participating in government because of changes in other parties’ seat shares’. Parties should not always be seat-maximising, then. Individual factors might also be relevant here, such as a Labour leader having waited for many years to be prime minister, then facing the likelihood of losing that post very quickly – or a Labour leader willing to wait and hence rejecting a coalition deal.

Note, again, that both scenarios imply that Labour must seriously consider introducing MMS pre-emptively if it expects to lose seats at a forthcoming general election. As with AV,

electoral arithmetic may mean that super-sized MMS has more chance of winning Commons support in the face of attitudinal Labour opposition if introduced before it is strictly necessary.

It is worth reiterating that party interest may rule out super-sized MMS if the estimated cost in votes and seats is too great. As explained earlier, I include this option here in case interest-motivated party leaders would at least consider this possibility.

## **8. Party interest: the other side of the coin**

Leaving aside the possible cost in votes, and seats, we must still ask whether super-sized MMS would really be more in Labour's interest than SMP. First, this reform would lose Labour its current advantages under SMP, including pro-Labour bias and (while Labour leads the Conservatives) some advantage from responsiveness. Labour would in effect be sacrificing its longer-term chances of single-party power for short-term gain.

Second, the short-term gain may still be possible without electoral reform. Consider a hung parliament where Labour rejects the Liberal Democrats' offer of a coalition deal with PR at the next election. Temporary minority government would be no disaster, especially as the top-heavy British system of government gives extensive executive powers even to minority governments. In legislative terms, too, single-party minority governments can often pick and choose different parties to support different bills (Tsebelis 2002, 97-8). Votes of confidence are certainly a danger but the Conservatives would not defeat the government unless they felt confident that they could form a new administration or win a forthcoming election. Short of such an eventuality, Labour might do what it did in the 1970s: reject a coalition and electoral reform, then call an election when the opinion polls were more suitable.

Moreover, the Liberal Democrats might agree to a coalition deal without electoral reform. This would give them direct power in legislative and executive issues, and they might bank on further seat gains at a forthcoming election. In other words, if the Liberal Democrats had to choose between a coalition with no PR, or continued opposition, they might just choose the former.

Things would be different if the Liberal Democrats also had a credible threat to join the Conservatives in a coalition. In other words, Labour would face a choice between coalition government with electoral reform *or opposition*, not single-party minority government. That could turn into an interesting 'game of chicken' in which electoral reform would be more likely. But it would be a lopsided game, assuming that the Conservatives could not accept electoral reform, and it would be strategically difficult for the Liberal Democrats. They currently benefit from

anti-Conservative tactical voting which requires such voters to perceive the Liberal Democrats as ideologically close to Labour. This makes a coalition with the Conservatives ideologically implausible; such a coalition would also probably slash Liberal Democrat support, votes and seats. But the same loss of support, votes and seats may also result from the Liberal Democrats trying to position themselves to have a credible threat of a coalition with the Conservatives – for example, by returning to the policy of ‘equidistance’ that they abandoned in 1994. Under equidistance, the Liberal Democrats would only benefit from tactical votes and seats if there were many anti-Labour supporters choosing between Conservative and Liberal Democrat candidates, and many anti-Conservative supporters choosing between Labour and Liberal Democrat candidates. Yet neither situation would be likely if the Liberal Democrats were seen as potential coalition partners with the opposing major party.

This is a second crucially important reason why my earlier article mis-stated the role of bias in hung parliaments. Part of the bias which gives Labour an incentive to maintain SMP *also gives the Liberal Democrats an incentive to avoid getting close to the Conservatives*, which in turn reduces the credibility of a threat to form a coalition with the Conservatives, which in turn gives the Liberal Democrats less leverage over Labour in pressuring for electoral reform, which in turn *makes electoral reform less likely*. Bias can weaken SMP but here we see again how it can help to keep SMP in place: it not only gives one major party an incentive to retain SMP but also narrows the conditions under which SMP could be replaced. The party system and electoral system may work very differently in the future but for now caution is required about hung parliaments leading to strong pressures for reform.

## 9. Conclusion

This paper has used veto player theory to clarify the electoral system choices faced by British political leaders in an era where hung parliaments and small government majorities are more likely. The House of Commons is the most significant veto point, and against the common assumption that MPs backing electoral reform would be like turkeys voting for Christmas, I have suggested that attitudes and party-interest are bigger concerns than self-interested incumbency protection.

Two types of electoral reform could get majority support from self-interested incumbents: AV and super-sized MMS. AV is obviously partisan, raising veto fears after the Commons, and its introduction would be threatened in the Commons by fears of tactical unwind. Super-sized MMS may not be politically viable given the possible cost in votes and seats.

And either reform could be rejected by a hardnosed Labour leadership unwilling to risk its longer-term potential for single-party government. Much would depend on how strongly Labour and Liberal Democrat leaders wanted power, as well as the precise terms of a coalition agreement.

The bargaining in such situations is hard to predict, but political science does highlight the importance of looking ahead. Backwards induction requires two things of a Labour agenda-setter considering electoral reform. First, the Labour agenda-setter must look ahead, ideologically and politically, to the veto points. The agenda-setter must then compute the possible electoral reforms that could avoid vetoes. Second, the Labour agenda-setter must look ahead in time, to see whether the electoral arithmetic may prohibit reform after a forthcoming election. Pre-emptive electoral reform may be required. But that requires great foresight and strategic thinking on the basis of uncertain calculations; many politicians will not risk this.

Should AV and super-sized MMS not be viable options, electoral reform becomes harder. A government would probably have to side-step the House of Commons by choosing a pathway where the Commons comes after a referendum or Citizens' Assembly. Yet even here the largest party would probably have to see some benefit in reform, and while SMP continues to translate votes to seats in the current way, there are relatively few conditions under which this will be the case.

In short, the winset of opportunity for electoral reform in the UK is narrow. Although hung parliaments and small government majorities are now more likely than before, the resulting pressure for electoral reform may still be easy to resist – or hard to enact.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Giacomo Benedetto and David Farrell for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.

## REFERENCES

- Bale, Tim, 2006. PR Man? Cameron's Conservatives and the symbolic politics of electoral reform, *The Political Quarterly* 77.1, 28-34.
- Baston, Lewis, 2005. *The UK General Election of 5 May 2005: Report and Analysis*. London: Electoral Reform Society,
- Bawn, Kathleen, 1993. The logic of institutional preferences: German electoral law as a social choice outcome, *American Journal of Political Science* 37.4, 965-89.
- Benoit, Kenneth, and John W. Schiemann, 2001. Institutional choice in new democracies: bargaining over Hungary's 1989 electoral law, *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 13.2, 153-82.
- Birch, Sarah, Frances Millard, Marina Popescu, and Kieran Williams, 2002. *Embodying Democracy? Electoral System Design in Post-Communist Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Blau, Adrian, 2001. Partisan bias in British general elections. *British Elections and Parties Review* 11, 46-65.

- Blau, Adrian, 2002. *Seats-Votes Relationships in British General Elections, 1955-1997*. University of Oxford, DPhil thesis.
- Blau, Adrian. 2004. A quadruple whammy for first-past-the-post, *Electoral Studies* 23.3, 431-53.
- Blau, Adrian, 2005. The new three-party politics? Paper presented at Elections, Public Opinion and Parties annual conference, University of Essex, 9-11 September.
- Blau, Adrian, 2006. The effective number of parties at four scales: votes, seats, legislative power and cabinet power. (Working paper.)
- Blau, Adrian, n.d. Sensitivity analysis of multi-election regression of the translation of votes to seats in single-member district electoral systems. (Working paper.)
- Bogdanor, Vernon, 1981. *The People and the Party System: the Referendum and Electoral Reform in British Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brennan, Geoff, and Alan Hamlin, 2004. Analytic conservatism, *British Journal of Political Science* 34.4, 675-91.
- Brennan, Geoff, and Alan Hamlin, 2006. Conservatism, idealism and cardinality, (forthcoming).
- Butler, David, 1951. 'Appendix III: analysis of the results', in H.G. Nicholas, *The British General Election of 1950*. London: Macmillan.
- Campbell, James, 1996. *Cheap Seats: The Democrat Party's Advantage in U.S. House Elections*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press.
- Colomer, Josep, 2005. It's parties that choose electoral systems (or, Duverger's laws upside down), *Political Studies* 53.1, 1-21.
- Cowley, Philip, 2002. *Revolts and Rebellions: Parliamentary Voting Under Blair*. London, Politico's.
- Cox, Gary, and Matthew McCubbins, 2005, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the US House of Representatives*.
- Curtice, John, 2005 ..... article in *Independent*.
- Curtice, John, Stephen Fisher, and Michael Steed. 2005. Appendix 2: the results analysed, in Dennis Kavanagh and David Butler, *The British General Election of 2005*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 235-59.
- Denemark, David, 2001. Choosing MMP in New Zealand: explaining the 1993 electoral reform, in Matthew Søberg Shugart and Martin Wattenberg, eds., *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 70-95.
- Donovan, Mark, 1995. The politics of electoral reform in Italy, *International Political Science Review* 16.1, 47-64.
- Dumont, Patrick, and Jean-François Caullier, 2005. The 'effective number of relevant parties': how voting power improves Laakso-Taagepera's index. CEREC working paper, <http://centres.fusl.ac.be/CEREC/document/people/caulier/enrp.pdf>.
- Dunleavy, Patrick, 2002. Elections and party politics, in Patrick Dunleavy, Andrew Gamble, Richard Heffernan, Ian Holliday and Gillian Peele, eds., *Developments in British Politics* 6, rev. edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dunleavy, Patrick. 2005. "Facing up to Multi-Party Politics: How Partisan Dealignment and PR Voting Have Fundamentally Changed Britain's Party Systems." *Parliamentary Affairs* 58: 503-32.
- Dunleavy, Patrick, and Helen Margetts. 1995. Understanding the dynamics of electoral reform. *International Political Science Review* 16.1, 9-29.
- Dunleavy, Patrick, and Helen Margetts, 2001. From majoritarianism to pluralist democracy? Electoral reform in Britain since 1997. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 13.3, 295-319.
- Dunleavy and Margetts 2005, ..... *Parliamentary Affairs* ...
- Farrell, David, and Michael Gallagher, 1999. British voters and their criteria for evaluating electoral systems, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 1:3, 293-316.
- Fisher, Steven, and John Curtice. 2006. Tactical unwind? Changes in party preference structure and tactical voting in Britain between 2001 and 2005, *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 16.1, 55-76.
- Geddes, Barbara, 1996. Initiation of new democratic institutions in Eastern Europe and Latin America, in Arend Lijphart and Carlos Waisman, eds., *Institutional Design in New Democracies: Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 15-41.

- Gelman, Andrew, and Gary King, 1994. A unified method of evaluating electoral systems and redistricting plans, *American Journal of Political Science* 38.2, 514-54.
- Grofman, Bernard, William Koetzle, and Thomas Brunell, 1997. 'An integrated perspective on the three potential sources of partisan bias: malapportionment, turnout differences, and the geographic distribution of party vote shares', *Electoral Studies* 16.4, 457-70.
- Hain, Peter, 2004. House of Commons speech ...
- John, Peter, Helen Margetts, David Rowland and Stuart Weir. 2006. *The BNP: The Roots of its Appeal*. Essex: Democratic Audit.
- King, Gary, and Browning, Robert, 1987. 'Democratic representation and partisan bias in congressional elections', *American Political Science Review* 81.4, 1251-73.
- Laakso, Markku, and Rein Taagepera. 1979. " 'Effective' Number of Parties: a Measure with Application to West Europe." *Comparative Political Studies* 12: 3-27.
- Lijphart, Arend, 1994. *Electoral Systems and Party Systems. A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies 1945-1990*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lijphart, Arend, 1999. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- McLean, Iain, Alistair McMillan, and Dennis Leech, 2005. Duverger's law, Penrose's power index and the unity of the UK, *Political Studies* 53.3, 457-76.
- Pekkanen, Robert, Benjamin Nyblade, and Ellis Krauss, 2006. Electoral incentives in mixed-member systems: party, posts, and zombie politicians in Japan, *American Political Science Review* 100.2, 183-93.
- Pierson, Paul, 2000. Increasing returns, path dependence, and the study of politics, *American Political Science Review* 94.2, 251-67.
- Powell, G. Bingham. 2000. *Elections as Instruments of Democracy: Majoritarian and Proportional Visions*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Powell, G. Bingham. 2001. 'Response to Comments of Erik Moberg', <http://www.mobergpublications.se/positions/powellp.pdf>.
- Reed, Steven, and Michael Thies, 1999. The causes of electoral reform in Japan, in Matthew Soberg Shugart and Martin Wattenberg, eds., *Mixed-Member Electoral Systems: The Best of Both Worlds?*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 152-72.
- Russell, Meg, and Maria Sciara, 2006. Why does the government get defeated in the House of Lords? PSA paper.
- Schattschneider, E. 1960. *The Semisovereign People* ....
- Shugart, Matthew Soberg, 2006. Inherent and contingent factors in reform initiation in plurality systems. [February 2006 draft.]
- Shugart and Wattenberg 2001 ch. ...
- Soper, C.S., and Joan Rydon, 1958. 'Under-representation and electoral prediction', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 4.1, 94-106.
- Taagepera, Rein, and Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1989. *Seats and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Tsebelis, George. 2002. *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Vowles, Jack. 2004. Electoral Systems and Proportional Tenure of Government: Renewing The Debate, *British Journal of Political Science* 34: 166-179.
- Whiteley, Paul, 2005. Can we Forecast the Forecasters? An Evaluation of Rival Forecasting Models of the 2005 General Election in Britain. Paper given at Elections, Public Opinion and Parties annual conference, University of Essex, 9-11 September.
- Woodall, Brian. 1999. The politics of reform in Japan's lower house electoral system, in Bernard Grofman, Sung-Chull Lee, Edwin Winckler, and Brian Woodall, eds, *Elections in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan under the Single Non-Transferable Vote: The Comparative Study of an Embedded Institution*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press. 23-50.