



International
Foundation
for Electoral
Systems



Electoral Systems and Lebanon

IFES Introduction
21 December 2009

This document provides a background to electoral systems within a Lebanese political context. It does not represent any formal IFES policy.

Electoral Systems and Lebanon: an IFES overview



What is the role of an electoral system?

An electoral system is of key political and democratic importance as it determines who 'wins' an election by the method of translating votes into seats.

Why are there different electoral systems?

Elections have different goals for different people:

- Should elections give a clear result or reflect the different nuances of public opinion?
- Should seats be won by those with most votes, or should seats be divided between all those who win votes?
- Should elections lead to a strong government or to consensus politics?
- Should elected representatives have close and local links to their voters?
- Should elections prioritize the equal treatment of all voters?
- Should elections ensure minority representation?

The choice between the different electoral systems available reflect how decision-makers wish to answer these and other questions of prime political importance.

What is the best electoral system?

There is no 'perfect' system. Each system has its advantages and disadvantages.

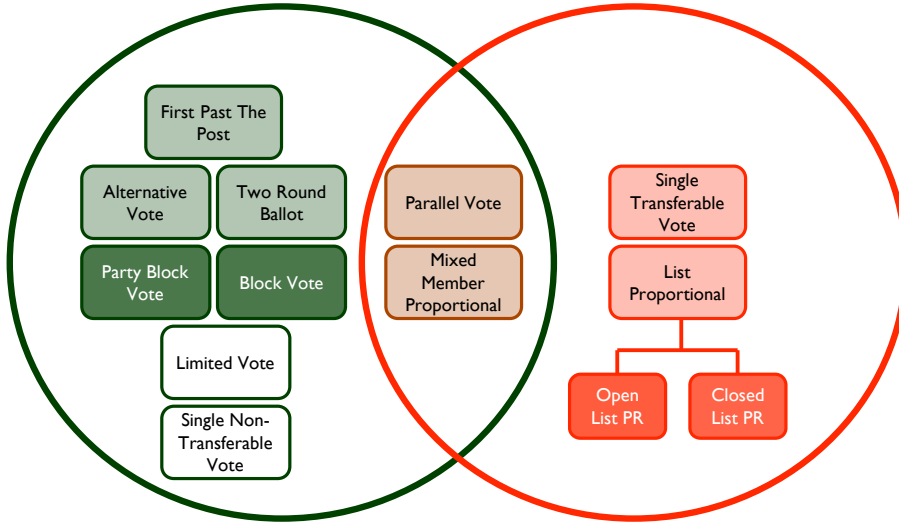
However, all systems can be seen to have specific advantages and disadvantages, and may also be prone to specific problems.

The Different Types of Electoral Systems



Plurality / Majoritarian Systems

Proportional Systems

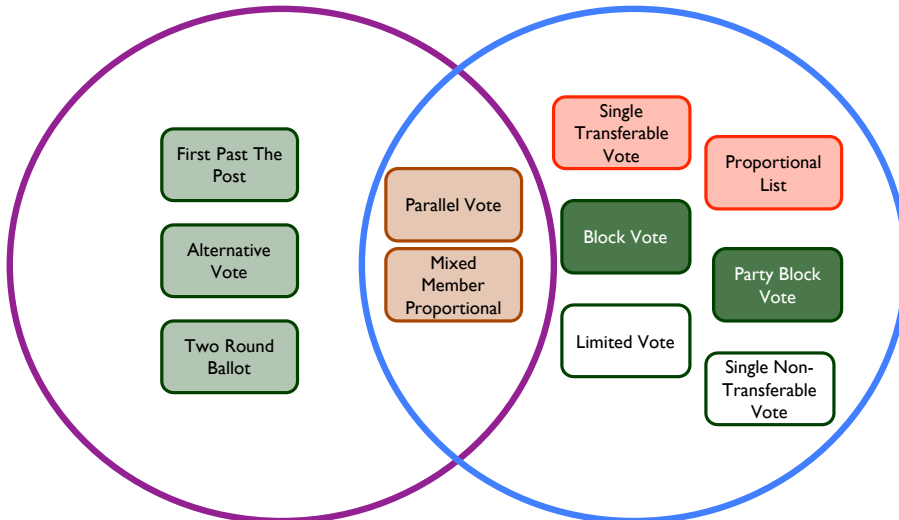


The Different Types of Electoral Systems: by number of seats per district



Systems with one seat per district

Systems with more than one seat per district



The Different Types of Single Member Plurality / Majoritarian Systems



First Past The Post

Voters can vote for one candidate. The candidate with the highest number of votes wins the seat even if it is not more than 50%.

First Past The Post Example

Number of Voters	120,000		
Candidate A	50,000	41.6%	Winner
Candidate B	30,000	25%	
Candidate C	40,000	33.4%	

Two Round Majority Ballot

Voters can vote for one candidate. A candidate must have 50% of votes to win. If no candidate wins in the first round, there is a second round with the two candidates who won the highest number of votes. i.e. voting takes place on two separate days

Two Round Ballot Example

Number of Voters (First Round)	120,000		
Candidate A	50,000	41.6%	1st highest
Candidate B	30,000	25%	
Candidate C	40,000	33.4%	2nd highest

Number of Voters (Second Round)	120,000		
Candidate A	55,000	46%	
Candidate C	65,000	54%	Winner

Alternative Vote

Voters can vote for more than one candidate and indicate their preference in a rank order. If no candidate has 50% of first preference votes, the least popular candidate is eliminated and their second preference votes are added, and so on until one candidate wins a majority of votes. i.e. voting takes place on one day only

Alternative Vote Example

Number of Voters (First Round of Counting)	120,000		
	Number of first preferences		
Candidate A	50,000		
Candidate B	30,000	Lowest scoring: 2 nd preferences re-allocated	
Candidate C	40,000		

Number of Voters (Second Round of Counting)	120,000		
	1 st Preferences	2 nd Preferences from B's voters	TOTAL
Candidate A	50,000	5,000	55,000
Candidate C	40,000	25,000	65,000
			Winner

The Different Types of Multiple Member Plurality / Majoritarian Systems



Block Vote

Voters have more than vote and can vote for as many candidates as there are seats available. The candidates with the highest number of votes win the seats even if none gain more than 50%.

Block Vote Example

Number of Voters	120,000		3 seats available
Candidate A	50,000	41.67%	Winner
Candidate B	30,000	25.00%	
Candidate C	40,000	33.33%	
Candidate D	40,500	33.75%	Winner
Candidate E	65,000	54.17%	Winner
Candidate F	10,000	8.33%	
Candidate G	25,000	20.83%	
Candidate H	35,000	29.17%	
Candidate I	25,500	21.25%	

Party Block Vote

Voters have one vote only and can vote for one list of candidates. All seats available are won by the list with the highest number of votes win the seats even if none gain more than 50%.

Limited Vote

Voters have more than vote but not as many as there are seats available. The candidates with the highest number of votes win the seats even if none gain more than 50%.

Single Non-Transferable Vote

Voters have one vote only. The candidates with the highest number of votes win the seats even if none gain more than 50%.

SNTV Example

Number of Voters	120,000		3 seats available
Candidate A	17,000	14.17%	Winner
Candidate B	8,000	6.67%	
Candidate C	24,000	20.00%	Winner
Candidate D	15,500	12.92%	
Candidate E	6,000	5.00%	
Candidate F	8,000	6.67%	
Candidate G	15,000	12.50%	
Candidate H	9,000	7.50%	
Candidate I	17,500	14.58%	Winner

The Different Types of Multiple Member Proportional Systems



Proportional Representation Lists

Voters can vote for a list of candidates (e.g. from one political party). The list receives seats in proportion to their share of the vote. A formula is used to allocate seats (the *highest average method* or the *largest remainder method*)

Closed List PR

Voters choose the list they wish to support. Seats are allocated between candidates by the choice of the party (usually in the order in which candidates appeared in the list).

Open List PR

Voters choose the list they wish to support and/or may indicate a preference for one or more candidates on that list. Seats are allocated between candidates by the order in which they have received preferential votes.

Quotas

List PR systems can make it easier to get women elected, especially through closed list systems.

PR List Example

Number of Voters	120,000	9 Seats	
	List A	List B	List C
	50,000	30,000	40,000
Results	4 Seats	2 Seats	3 Seat
% of seats	41.6%	25%	33.4%
% of vote	44.2%	22.2%	33.3%

Single Transferable Vote

Voters can vote for more than one candidate and indicate their preference in a rank order. An 'electoral quotient' is reached by dividing the number of voters who voted by the seats available. All candidates with more votes than the quotient are elected. The least successful candidates are eliminated and their second preferences are re-distributed AND the second preferences of those elected. Process continues until all seats are allocated.

The Different Types of Mixed Systems



Parallel System

The election process is split: some seats are allocated by a plurality-majoritarian system, the others by a PR list system. Voters vote as many times as each system allows.

e.g.

Parliament has 132 seats
66 are elected using a block vote system.
66 are elected using a PR list system.

When allocating seats, there is no correlation between the two.

e.g.

Seats are allocated 6 to FPTP, 3 to PR
List A wins 5 seats under FPTP and 45% of votes under PR
List B wins 1 seat under FPTP and 35% of votes under PR
List C wins 0 seat under FPTP and 30% of votes under PR

	FPTP	PR List % of Vote
List A	4	45
List B	1	35
List C	1	30

Mixed Member-Proportional System

The election process is split: some seats are allocated by a plurality-majoritarian system, the others by a PR list system. Voters vote as many times as each system allows.

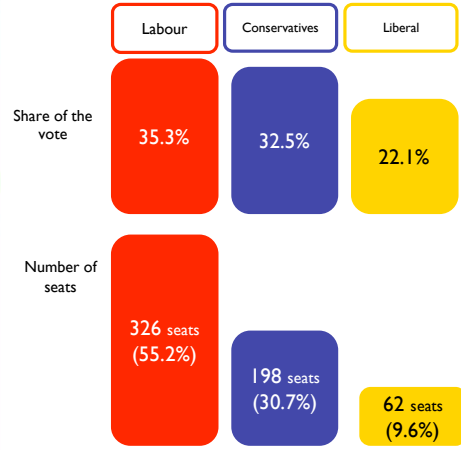
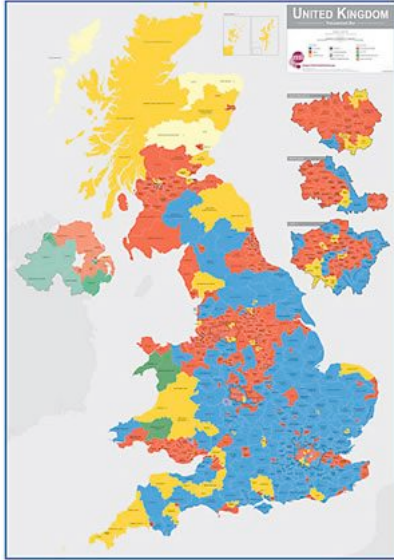
e.g.

Parliament has 60 seats
40 are elected using a FPTP system.
20 are elected using a PR list system.

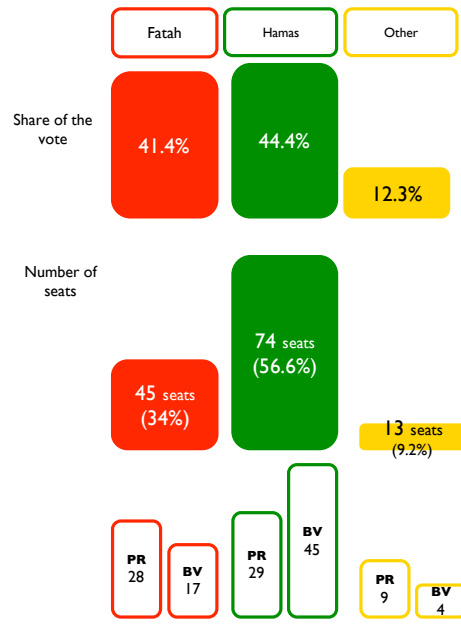
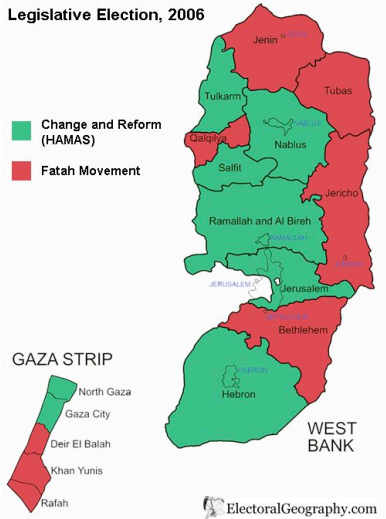
Allocation of seats under PR attempts to compensate for disproportional results under the FPTP.

	Parallel			MMP		
	FPTP	PR	Total	FPTP	PR	Total
List A	4	1	5	4	0	4
List B	1	1	2	1	2	3
List C	1	1	2	1	1	2

The Different Types of Systems in Practice: FPTP in the United Kingdom



The Different Types of Systems in Practice: Parallel Voting in Palestine



Advantages & Disadvantages of different electoral systems



	List PR	FPTP	Two-round Voting	Parallel	MMP
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportional & Inclusive Minority Representation Easier steps for women's Representation Few wasted votes No need to hold by-elections Easy absentee voting Limits 'one party' districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple to understand Stronger accountability Strong geographical link in small districts Simple to understand Majority government more likely Excludes extremists Simple to count 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple to understand Provides support of majority of voters Stronger accountability Strong geographical link in small districts Majority government more likely Excludes extremists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportional & Inclusive Geographic links Accountability of individuals Few wasted votes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportional & Inclusive Geographic links Accountability of individuals Few wasted votes
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak geographical representation Issues of accountability Likelihood of coalitions Power with parties Inclusion of 'extremes' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excludes smaller parties Excludes minorities Possible 'democratic deficit' Often excludes women Many wasted votes Creates a need for by-elections Requires boundary delimitation Difficult for absentee voting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires a costly 2nd Round Excludes smaller parties Excludes minorities Possible 'democratic deficit' Often excludes women Many wasted votes Creates a need for by-elections Requires boundary delimitation Difficult for absentee voting Long electoral period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complicated system Requires boundary delimitation Creates a need for by-elections Can create two-classes of representatives Strategic voting Difficult for absentee voting Does not guarantee overall proportionality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complicated system Requires boundary delimitation Creates a need for by-elections Can create two-classes of representatives Strategic voting Difficult for absentee voting

Important Factors in Electoral System Design



Context

What kind of political system is there in place?
What kind of historical precedent is there?

Districts

How many seats per district?
Can equal suffrage be guaranteed?

Drawing of boundaries

How will the districts be drawn up?
Who will draw the districts?

Guaranteeing Representation

Do any groups need special protection?
(e.g. Ethnic or minority groups)
Do any groups need assistance in getting elected?
(e.g. women)

Complexity and Cost

Are there issues with literacy, sustainability and logistics?

Political Acceptance

What kind of system do the decision-makers want?
What kind of system do the voters want?

The Lebanese Ballot Paper



How to Vote in Lebanon

Lebanon has a unique electoral system. While mono-confessional districts (e.g. Kerswan has 5 Maronite seats) have a 'classic' Block Vote, many other districts have mini-competitions taking place e.g. (Beirut I has five FPTP contests).



Photo from www.qifanabki.com

However, candidates come together to form a single list so that one candidate's supporters can benefit another. Thus, each list wants the supporters of its different candidates to vote as a 'block' as whichever list has the highest number of votes is likely to win all seats in that district.

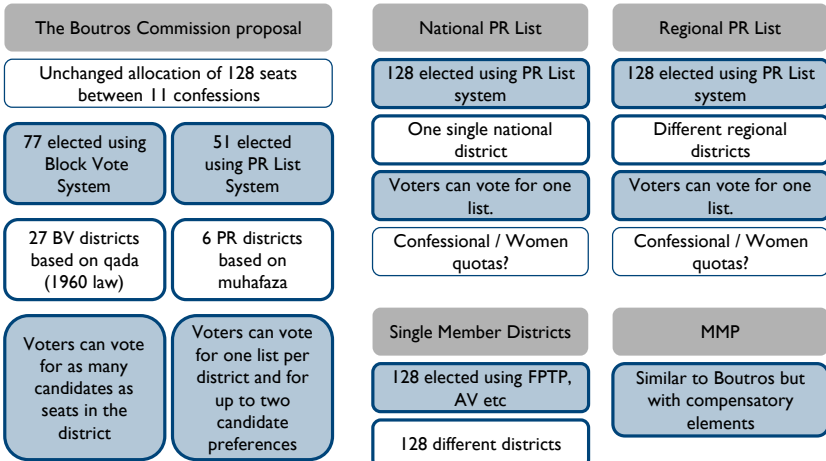
The list system is made more effective by the absence of standardized ballots. Each list distributes its own ballots; a ballot where voters could choose candidates from different lists would undermine the chances of a list winning all seats. The only district where votes were cast 'across list' was Metn.

The system means that there is little relationship between the number of seats won in Parliament and proportion of the national share of the vote.

In Kerswan, the FPM list won all 5 seats with 51%-53% of the vote.

In Beirut I, the March 14 list won all 5 seats with 52-54% of the vote.

Possible Alternatives



PR lists must include a minimum number of women candidates



Has the Block Vote system actually worked in reaching its goals?

What does Lebanon want from an electoral system?

How many seats should there be in parliament?

Should there be confessional reserved seats?

Should there be a review of confessional numbers?

Should there be a mechanism for increasing the number of women?

What kind of boundaries should there be?

Should ballot papers be introduced?

What kind of electoral system do the politicians want?

What kind of electoral system and politicians does the public want?



Who should decide on the electoral system?