The impact of UK electoral systems

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THE IMPACT OF THE UK'S ELECTORAL SYSTEMS*

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In the immediate aftermath of the general election the *Independent* ran a whole-page headline illustrated with contrasting graphics showing 'What we voted for' and 'What we got', followed up by '…and why it's time for change'.[1] The paper launched a petition calling for a shift to a system that is fairer and more proportional, which in rapid time attracted tens of thousands of signatories, initially at a rate of more than 500 people a day. These developments highlighted the extent to which the plurality rule voting system for general elections (also still used for council elections in England and Wales) itself became an election issue. During the campaign itself the normal bi-polarizing statements from Labour and Conservative politicians proclaiming a 'straight choice' between them were typically no sooner issued that drowned out in a chorus of dissent. The *Guardian* featured a prominent campaign by Polly Toynbee for readers to voter Labour with the aid of a clothes peg, symbolizing distaste for the Hobson's choice of either supporting a government with disliked policies like the invasion of Iraq, or voting for other parties and possibly 'letting in' the Conservatives (with more disliked policies, notably on immigration).[2] The corollary of accepting the clothes peg was said to be a vigorous post-election campaign to make 2005 the last plurality rule general election.[3]

The 2005 result offered some further significant pointers also to how the problem of achieving change in the election system might work itself out. Josep Colomer has recently argued that there is no evidence to support 'Duverger's law' that plurality rule systems induce a smaller number of parties.[4] Rather he argues that when the number of parties in a system decisively increases above two or three, so the risks for established parties of power increase that they will do badly under the increasingly chaotic results that plurality rule often

generates with multiple parties. At this point and this point only, when the number of parties in a system has already increased, Colomer argues, incumbent major party elites will be willing to move to a more proportional system as a defensive move, to safeguard their position against losing out catastrophically. Thus the number of parties typically shows no further change once proportional representation (PR) is introduced, because only the prior decisive advent of multi-party politics can trigger this kind of electoral system being conceded by self-interested elites. We have argued elsewhere that the UK is already in the process of a prolonged transition to PR, marked by the 'co-existence' of PR and plurality rule election systems, within which there has been a gradual transition to proportional systems.[5] The latest increment in this process is the advent of single transferable vote (STV) for Scottish local elections and the next increment might well be the concession of PR elections for choosing at least a majority of members of the House of Lords. To assess how far this process was advanced or not by the general election we focus on three different dimensions of electoral system effects: (1) changes in the number of parties competing; (2) the proportionality of the electoral system; and (3) some continuing strengths of the current system.

Most of the analysis here focuses on the regional level, which may seem a rather strange thing to do, because regions play no formal role in plurality rule elections. However, regional results allow us to explore the diversity of plurality rule operations, which is rarely what it seems from national level data. In particular, from an 'experiential' point of view the most important aspect of electoral systems' operations is how they feel to voters. In this sense an experiential approach contrast strongly with the more conventional, 'institutionalist' approach.[6] Strictly speaking the optimal way of assessing experiential effects would be to map most individual voters' area of reference, the space that they consider 'around here' for themselves, and then to assess how the voting system operated within the majority perceptions of this localized 'region', whose extent might vary considerably from one constituency or region to another. The data demands of this approach are heavy, however, and we lack the key data on voters' perceptions needed to operationalize it. The regional data considered here are clunky and inadequate by comparison, but they do at least address important dimensions of variations in how citizens experienced the general election, especially by contrast with some other proportional elections recently analysed, such as the

2004 European Parliament elections where the regions are institutionally important as constituencies. Government data is also increasingly presented and analysed in terms of the standard regions.

The Numbers of Parties in Competition

When the Treasury building in London was redesigned (in 2001 under a Private Finance Initiative project) the designer called in to handle the atrium decorated it with three large illuminated bars, running from floor to ceiling in blue, red and orange. Including the Liberal Democrats' orange party colour along with the blue and red of the Conservatives and Labour could perhaps be read as a belated acknowledgement of the Liberal Democrats' contemporary importance in party politics. The same stance was mirrored by all sections of the media in 2005, which recognized three major parties as rarely before, with the Liberal Democrats' equal time allocations even extending into satirical shows. Yet like much else in British life, no sooner was an updating conceded than it in turn became dated. In 2004 the European Parliament elections showed that the number of 'effective ' parties ranged between 4.8 and 5.9 across regions in Great Britain, with Labour and the Conservatives struggling to hang on to just over half the total votes between them.[7] A year later at the general election the 'two party' share of the vote declined below 70 per cent for the first time, and although Labour once again became the clear majority party in the House of Commons, its UK vote share fell to the lowest ever recorded for a majority government in the UK's democratic history.[8]

The 2005 election saw a mushrooming of candidacies by UK Independence Party (UKIP), the Greens, the British National Party (BNP) and other newer arrivals, including Respect. The votes gained per constituency by these parties were rarely substantial, but Table 1 shows that eight parties nationwide got into the top four placings across the different regions. All eight of these parties should now be considered permanent additions to the British party system, with substantial numbers of council seats for the BNP and with UKIP and the Greens both winning Euro seats and places in the London Assembly in the June 2004 elections.[9]

-- Table 1 about here—

Table 2 gives a more detailed picture at the regional level of the new contours of competition in 2005, showing the regional rankings that underpin the scoring system used in Table 1. The Labour plus Conservative share of the vote was below two thirds in Scotland and Wales and

elsewhere ranged between 69 and 75 per cent. The largest party share of the votes was above half in only one region, the north east, and elsewhere lay in the range from 39 to 45 per cent. Support for fourth or subsequent parties in England was generally 5 to 6 per cent, but in the west midlands nearly touched 8 per cent, thanks to stronger performances there by UKIP, the BNP and a local independent.

-- Table 2 about here –

Table 2 also shows some indications of the parties that were 'bubbling under' in 2005. The number of parties winning at least 1 per cent support was generally either five or six, except for the north east and east midlands, where it was still just four. In most regions at least eleven parties gained more than 0.1 per cent of the vote, a generous 'bubbling under' sign. Some of these show signs of endurance, such as the Christian People's Alliance in London, which does better in the Assembly elections there. There was also no shortage of candidates for people to vote for, with at least 17 named and registered parties standing in every region of the country, adding up to more than 30 parties in London and the south east.

The indicator most widely used to capture the weighted importance of different parties in competition is ENP, the effective number of parties. The core idea here is to take account of all the parties in competition but weight them in relation to their size, so that in arriving at an overall number of parties estimate we weight larger parties more than smaller ones.[10] Figure 1 shows as a background grid the underlying shape of the areas that are feasible for ENP scores of different magnitudes. Here the horizontal axis shows the vote share of the largest party, and the vertical axis shows the ENP score for votes, that is the weighted number of parties that voters chose to support. The curvy areas marked show the spaces where ENP scores of a certain magnitude could be.[11]

--Figure 1 about here--

The nub of Figure 1 though is to compare the regional ENP for votes scores in the 2005 general election (shown as round dots) with those for the same regions in the 2004 European election less than a year earlier (shown as squares). The two sets of results are completely different. In the 2004 Euro elections, the regional largest party vote share ranges from 26 to 35 per cent, and the ENP scores from 4.8 to 5.9, similar to the results of general elections in Italy. Whereas in 2005 the regional largest party shares vary between 39 and 53 per cent and the ENP numbers from 2.7 to 3.6, not dissimilar to previous general election scores. The detailed pattern within each of the two data clusters here also varies, so that a region with

more parties in 2004 did not necessarily show more parties in 2005. Figure 1 summarizes visually the importance of co-existence between PR and plurality rule systems. It shows the large gaps in voters' behaviour that separate the two different electoral contexts, in part due to different issue mixes and voter preference patterns across different institutional contexts, but also equally in part because of voters' awareness of the different electoral systems being used to count their votes.

The ENP score can also be computed not just for the votes allocated by citizens across the parties (ENP votes) but also for the MPs allocated by the electoral system across the parties (ENP seats). Figure 2 shows that as ever with plurality rule under multi-party conditions there is a stark contrast between these two scores. The diagonal line up the centre of the Figure shows where a system operating proportionately would be, one where the number of parties winning seats approximates the number winning votes. Only one region (the south west) is anywhere near the line, with most of the rest clustered in the square showing 3 to 3.5 parties in terms of votes, but only 1.5 to 2.0 parties winning representation. The mismatches are especially marked for Scotland, Wales and the north east.

--Figure 2 about here—

Table 3 shows the same results but additionally computes a measure recommended by Taagepera and Shugart known as the relative reduction in parties (RRP).[12] RRP shows how much of the voters' choice set is ignored by the voting system in allocating seats, and for Britain as a whole was a sizable 31 per cent in 2005, broadly consistent with past elections. This national score is misleading, however, because the picture at individual region level is much worse, and some of these differences are blurred by aggregation to national level. All but three regions (the south west, London and east midlands) have RRP scores above two fifths, and the top four regions in Table 3 have astonishingly high levels above 50 per cent – which means that more than half the voters' choice set in these areas is ignored in allocating seats.

-- Table 3 about here --

The Disproportionality of the Voting System

The main measure of disproportionality has been to compute measures of deviation from pure proportionality in the allocation of seats to parties. Figure 3 shows two measures of

disproportionality across the regions of Great Britain in 2005. The first and best known is the deviation from proportionality (DV) score.[13] It shows the proportion of members of a legislature who hold seats which they are not entitled to by virtue of their party's overall vote share in the elections – that is, what percentage of MPs would be replaced by representatives of different parties under a pure proportional system. The DV measure in theory has a floor of zero but in practice the minimum level is around 4 per cent. (This is because even the purest PR system will have difficulty in giving any representation to votes which are split across many very small parties or independent candidates).

As in previous general elections, the DV scores in Figure 3 demonstrate clearly that national general election DV numbers mask much greater regional disparities in seats and votes under the plurality system. Strong pro-Labour biases in its areas of strength (central Scotland, Wales, the industrial north and inner conurbations) are partly offset in national DV scores by pro-Conservative biases elsewhere (such as the outer suburbs, south east and eastern England and more rural areas).[14] Figure 1 shows instead the levels of disproportionality as they are experienced by voters in the election results *within* the regional areas where they live. The regional DV scores in 2005 were as high as 42 per cent in Yorkshire, 41 per cent in the north east and 38 per cent in Wales. In these areas around two in every five votes found no expression at all in the make-up of the legislature, a staggeringly high level for any liberal democracy. However, there were reductions in DV elsewhere compared with 2001, notably in Scotland.

-- Figure 3 about here --

One of the major problems in interpreting the conventional DV score is that although it has a theoretical floor of zero, there is no relevant upper ceiling. (The DV score will reach 100 only when *none* of the parties winning votes in an election are awarded any of the seats, which is clearly a nonsensical measure to think about in relation to liberal democracies). To cope with this problem Figure 3 also shows a measure called 'alternative deviation from proportionality' (or ADV score).[15] This measure takes into account the initial size of the largest party's vote, which limits the scope for deviations from proportionality caused by 'leader's bias'. The ADV measure starts at zero but reaches 100 when the largest party wins all the seats available, whatever vote share it obtains. This is a relevant point to define a ceiling because if a polity goes across this line (for example, to 110 per cent) then we cannot

regard it as *any* kind of democracy. But a polity that has an ADV score of 100 is still (just) within the liberal democratic fold. [16]

In the 2005 election (as in 2001) the north east had the dubious distinction of achieving an 86 per cent ADV score, which makes this result five-sixths of the way to not being a liberal democratic outcome at all. With only 47 per cent of the votes capable of being distorted here (since the largest party had 53 per cent of the vote), there was none the less a 41 per cent DV score, with Labour winning all but 2 of the 30 available seats. Yorkshire and Humberside came a fairly close second, followed by two other regions (Wales and the north west) that were more than two-thirds of the way to not being a liberal democracy at all. Four other regions were just below the half-way mark. But only in the south west was anywhere near reasonable proportionality attained on the ADV measure. High though the ADV scores are here, they none the less show a slight improvement in around two-thirds of the regions compared with 2001, reflecting a lower 'leader's bias' for Labour due to its reduced vote share.

A second approach to estimating the fairness of plurality rule voting is to consider what would have happened if other voting systems were in place and had to cope with the precise patterns of voting across the country found in 2005. Our approach here is to use a simulation method, where we move from the constituency data to run specific alternative electoral systems.[17] Some important voting methods count multiple preferences –notably the alternative vote (AV), where voters rank parties in order numerically, used to elect the Australian lower house and sometimes advocated for the UK by Labour loyalists such as Peter Hain; the supplementary vote (SV), a simplified form of AV where voters indicate their top two preferences by X voting, used to elect the Mayor of London and ten other directly elected mayors in England; and the single transferable vote (STV), where voters indicate numerical preferences across candidates in different parties, to be used for the first time in mainland Britain for electing Scottish local councils and already deployed in Northern Ireland for many years. Unfortunately at the time of writing we do not have viable data on the regional second and subsequent preferences of voters in 2005.[18] So at this stage we cannot model multi-preference systems, although we hope to do so later on with data collected from the BES self-completion questionnaire.

However, from existing election results we are able to model two other proportional systems

which count basically first preferences. The first is List PR, which is used to elect the UK members of the European Parliament in regional constituencies. The second is the additional member system (AMS), which can be set up in a number of ways. 'British AMS' systems used for the Scotland Parliament, the Welsh National Assembly and the London Assembly have a small majority of seats elected by plurality rule in local constituencies and then sub-regional (or in London, city-wide) top-up seats elected in compensating fashion using List PR so as to give overall proportional results. The Jenkins Commission on voting system reform for the House of Commons recommended a stronger form of British AMS with the proportion of local seats kept very high at 83 per cent and the top-up seats kept to just a sixth. Research we conducted for the Commission suggested that this system would be broadly proportional.[19] However, subsequent experience with British AMS systems has shown that the release from the constraint of plurality rule encourages the display of broader range of party preferences and by somewhat increasing the proportion of small party votes raises the DV scores for the existing British AMS systems. We have concluded accordingly that it now seems highly unlikely that a Jenkins solution could deliver broad proportionality and that a larger proportion of top-up seats is almost certain to be required.[20] In Table 4 below we accordingly show data for the original Jenkins solution and a more generous 75 per cent local and 25 per cent top-up seats solution, which we now think is likely to be the minimum top-up seats needed for broad proportionality.

We also show for comparison the seats distributions resulting from a 'pure' AMS system on German or New Zealand lines, with a 50:50 local/top-up seats split. There is an additional methodological reason for including this information, namely that the simulation carried out here is a pretty rough and ready one. We have essentially paired up existing constituencies (with one or two cases of triple constituencies) across the country, so as to create 50 per cent of spare seats. These can then be allocated in county-level top-up areas, in line with the Jenkins Commission recommendation that top-up areas should be localized well below the regional level.[21] We have then essentially interpolated the 75:25 and 83:17 results by assuming a smoothly operating transition from the 50:50 solution (that we have defined) to the 100 per cent local seats general election result. Some anomalies are inevitably thrown up by this interpolation process, which we have 'hand-corrected'. This is a labour-intensive process and it produces results which need to be interpreted with some caution. But simulation predictions using this approach have modeled the existing British AMS elections

relatively well, once we control for changes in voting behaviour under PR, which of course cannot be fully anticipated in advance.[22]

We should also note two further limitations of the AMS results below. First, British AMS systems all give citizens two votes, one for the local and for the top-up contests. In Scotland and Wales around a quarter of voters split their two votes and in London approaching a third do so across more choices, reflecting the increasingly conditional character of modern voters' party attachments.[23] We cannot reproduce the two-vote effect here, but must rely on re-aggregating local votes at the top-up level. Second, the Jenkins Commission's recommended system was Alternative Vote-*plus*, since it combined a small proportion of top-up seats with a shift towards using the alternative vote in the local seats. So in Table 4 our AMS solution assumes only plurality rule local contests, since we do not have multi-preference data. (However, we can say from past work that the effect of AV in the Jenkins scheme is likely to be fairly predictable, cutting Tory seats by about a dozen and with labour and the Liberal Democrats roughly equal beneficiaries, as tactical voting between the two parties' supporters is somewhat facilitated).

-- Table 4 here --

The key result from Table 4 is that either List PR or 50:50 AMS would have reduced Labour's seat numbers by at least 120 seats. The main beneficiaries would be the Liberal Democrats, whose MPs would soar by at least 80, and the newer fourth and subsequent parties, whose seats would increase from 13 to 39 in Great Britain. UKIP would have a Parliamentary group of 13, outnumbering the SNP, on this basis. These are interesting results because in our simulation we have employed the de Hondt seats allocation system that is used in all the British AMS and List PR systems and which discriminates in favour of large parties. Even with this factor working against them, all of the top 8 parties in terms of regional placings would gain seats under the purer PR systems, along with some independents and perhaps also Respect in east London. However, the Conservatives would stand to gain relatively little from PR, shifting up only by a baker's dozen of seats.

Table 4 also shows that as the mix of local to top-up seats shifts towards a preponderance of local contests then the damage to Labour's number of MPs is cut dramatically. Labour's losses under a Jenkins solution would be half those under more proportional systems and the

Liberal Democrats and minor parties would lose half their gains as a result. The Conservatives under a Jenkins ratio of local and top-up seats would be no better off than they were in 2005 under plurality rule. It is little wonder, therefore, that the bulk of the party continues to be stony-faced 'rejectionist' in its attitudes towards electoral reform.

Finally on simulations the detailed tables in Annex 1, from which Table 4 derives, show that the List PR and 50:50 AMS systems both make a huge difference to the patterns of political representation across Great Britain. They particularly would bring to an end the problem of electoral 'deserts' for the three leading parties that apply under plurality rule and hence would give a balanced regional representation to all the main parliamentary parties for the first time. This effect is severely attenuated with the 75:25 and 83:17 mixes of local to top-up seats. But while numbers thin down outside the parties' core areas of strength in the less proportional AMS arrangements, the effect of broadening regional presence continues to operate. The smaller parties would also have small regional bases from which they could realistically hope to expand their support.

The Remaining Strengths of Plurality Rule

In many places in the modern world plurality rule systems are now under stress. A near-perfect two-party polity continues unchanged in American Congressional elections, producing very low proportionality scores (DV of about 7 per cent). But in the US presidential race plurality rule has been under pressure from third-party candidates, causing presidents with only minority support to be elected. In Canada the changing party system has produced chaotic party fortunes and a hung Parliament nationally in 2004-5. A slow-moving committee of Parliament is considering reform options at national level, and change initiatives are under way at provincial level in British Columbia, Ontario and Nova Scotia. Almost three fifths of BC voters backed a proposed change to STV in a May 2005 referendum.[24] In India, the world's largest plurality rule country, the number of parties in Parliament has now passed 150, the coalition government in 2005 draws on support from 16 parties, and ministers come from eight different parties. Clearly plurality rule no longer has much of a 'nationalizing politics' effect in this very large democracy.

So how strongly embedded is plurality rule in the UK? There are some aspects of the system that tend to prop up its effectiveness, including for instance the fact that national DV scores are significantly below regional ones, as offsetting pro-Labour and pro-Conservative biases cancel each other out. In addition, as Table 5 below shows the electoral system in Great Britain still confers a degree of influence on their representation that spans somewhat beyond the supporters of the largest or governing party alone. Here we examine whether people got the result that they wanted nationally, in terms of the party they voted for controlling government, or locally, in terms of the party they backed successfully electing the local MP. We also include as successful those people who voted for a party that emerged as preponderant in the region where they live, whether or not that party won their local seat. A 'triple winner' in Table 5 is someone whose vote proved effective at all three levels in 2005, and just over a fifth of voters fall into this category, all Labour voters by definition. By contrast, 'triple losers' found their votes completely unreflected at any level, and they accounted for over 37 per cent of voters in 2005, all from opposition parties, with Liberal Democrats the biggest component grouping, followed by Conservatives and then other party voters. However, most Conservative voters were either 'double winners' at the regional and local levels or were single winners at their local constituency level. No Liberal Democrat or other party voters were even double winners, but some were single winners at the local constituency level.

-- Table 5 about here ---

Overall 63 per cent of voters in Great Britain got something of what they wanted from the general election result, a very low number compared with (say) PR systems where 90 per cent plus of voters get something of what they want, but still a lot larger proportion than the 36 per cent who backed Labour alone. Comparing the proportion of winners over time also shows that in 1992 it was 73 per cent, and in 1997 only 61 per cent, so the 2005 result is a small improvement on 1997 but still far worse than 1992.[25] The proportion of all voters who were winners at some level but did not support the largest and governing party was less than 17 per cent in 1997. But it rose to nearly 27 per cent in 2005, thanks to Labour's falling levels of support. This suggests a broadening out of the base of people who got something of what they wanted from the electoral system.

It may perhaps also suggest that disaffection from the system is unlikely to grow in the short term, although a lot will depend on how the Prime Minister's evident unpopularity as a political leader in 2005 develops over the remainder of his period in office. A rapid leadership succession and new policies and a different climate of relations with voters from a presumably Gordon Brown-led government, could compensate for Labour's poor legitimacy in government (with only 35 per cent of the UK vote) so that the voting system fades as a concern. On the other hand, a lingering Blair premiership accompanied by spin and unchanged policies, perhaps with deteriorating foreign policy fortunes in the EU and Iraq, might be the trigger for dissatisfactions with the 2005 electoral race to find expression both in strong anti-government mid-term swings, continued growth of support for parties beyond the main three, and continuing overt dissatisfaction with plurality rule elections.

One dimension of the 2005 election suggested continuing problems for plurality rule. Despite radical measures taken to make postal voting easier, and a big growth in postal votes returned, the overall turnout rate in 2005 rose only marginally from the record low in 2001. Indeed if we screen out the 'artificial' rule-change effects of new postal balloting rules, the *underlying* rate of general election turnout probably continued to decline in 2005.[26] This compares unfavourably with local elections earlier in the second Blair term and the increase in European election turnout from 24 per cent in 1999 to 36 per cent (after adjusting for all-postal ballot region effects) in 2004. The fundamental way in which plurality rule very actively and obviously seeks to constrain how voters express their preferences in our view lies behind this continuing malaise. It was interesting to see in 2005 also that Labour and Conservative efforts to publicize and play up these constraining effects met with far more sustained media and public criticism than in any previous election, notably the rubbishing of Labour claims that a small fraction of their voters defecting to other parties would 'let the Tories back in'. This effect suggests that the forced constraining of voters' preferences will be a hard act to sustain in 2009, especially for Labour when the party will have been continuously in office for 12 years.

Conclusions

The dialectic of electoral reform in the UK is a subtle and long-run one. A chaining of differently-aligned developments contributes an overall momentum towards broader multi-

party politics, most notably the declining long-run vote shares for the two best established parties as well as the bottoming out of turnout, which seemingly would have fallen further still if not for generous postal voting arrangements. The 2005 general election results continue to show levels of distortion of voters' preferences by the electoral system that are very high by international standards. Plurality rule reduced the number of parties represented in the legislature in some regions by more than half and the alternative deviation from proportionality scores show many regional results that are well on the way to not being judged democratic outcomes at all. Although slightly more voters than in 1997 or 2001 got something of what they wanted out of the electoral system, the stagnation of turnout, the dislike of major party campaigning expressed in many quarters and the continuing post-election criticisms of the system all suggest that the trend towards an eventual constitutional adjustment to broader multi-party politics was reinforced rather than counteracted in 2005.

Annex 1: Regional Results for Additional Member System Simulation Exercises

(a) AMS with 50:50 Local and Top-up Seats

Regions	Lab	Con	Lib D	UKIP	SNP	Other	Plaid Cymru	Green	BNP	Total
South East	34	58	30	4		0		1	0	128
London	28	23	17	2		1		1	0	72
North West	31	19	14	2		2		0	0	68
South West	13	23	18	2		0		0	0	56
Scotland	23	9	13	0	10	2		0	0	56
West Midlands	21	19	10	1		2		0	1	55
Yorkshire	24	17	12	0		0		0	1	54
East Midlands	19	17	9	2		0		0	0	47
Wales	16	8	7	0		1	4	0	0	35
North	17	8	8	0		0		0	0	33
East Anglia	7	10	7	0		0		0	0	25
Great Britain	**234**	**210**	**145**	**13**	**10**	**8**	**4**	**2**	**2**	**628**

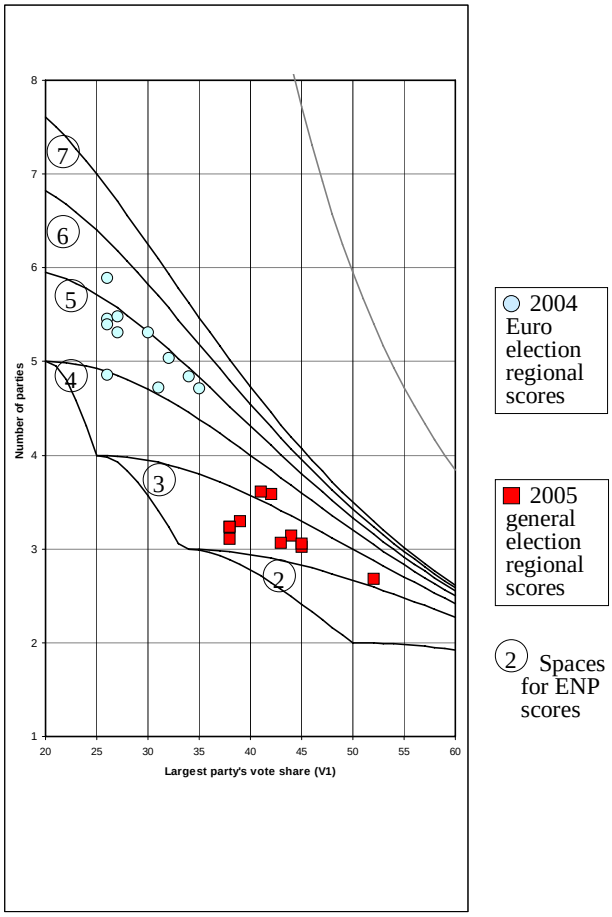
(b) AMS with 75:25 Local and Top-up Seats

Regions	Lab	Con	Lib Dem	UKIP	SNP	Plaid Cymru	Other	Green	BNP	Total
South East	25	66	23	3			0	1	0	117
London	34	22	15	1			1	2	0	74
North West	43	15	11	1			0	0	0	70
Scotland	31	8	11	0	8		2	0	0	59
West Midlands	29	18	9	2			1	0	0	58
Yorkshire	33	14	9	0			0	0	1	57
South West	12	20	17	3			0	0	0	52
East Midlands	19	17	8	2			0	0	0	45
Wales	23	8	6	0		4	1	0	0	41
North	23	7	7	0			0	0	0	37
East Anglia	6	12	5	0			0	0	0	22
TOTAL	**275**	**203**	**118**	**12**	**8**	**4**	**4**	**3**	**1**	**628**

(c) AMS with 83:17 Local and Top-up Seats

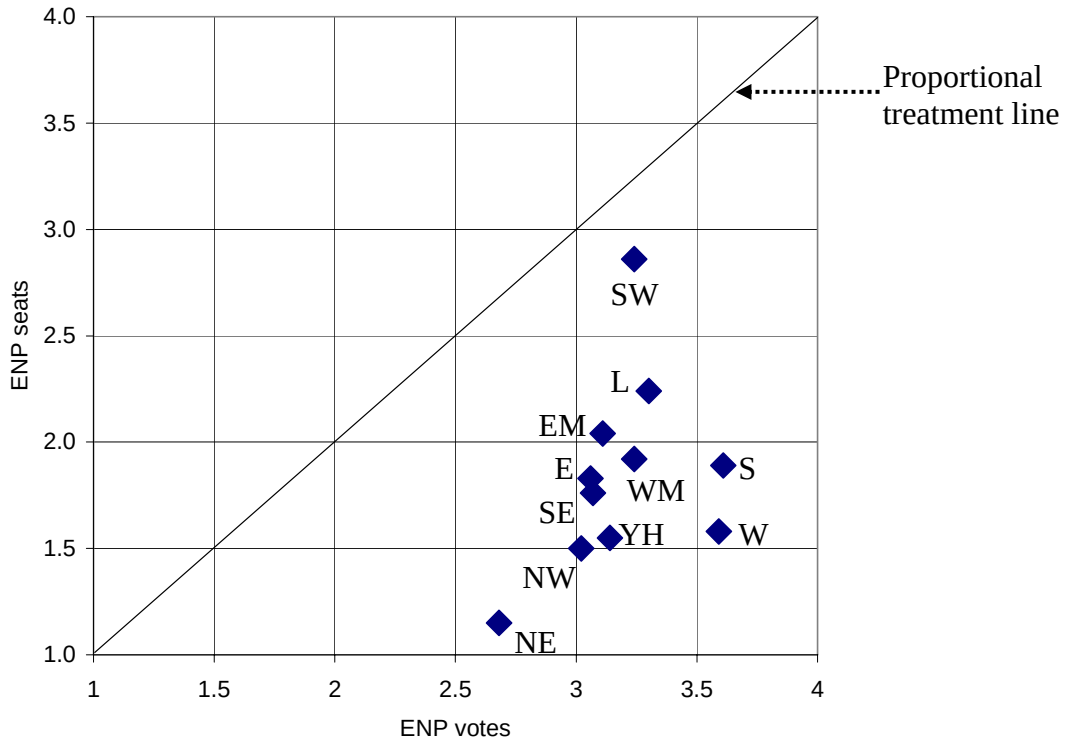
Regions	Lab	Con	Lib Dem	SNP	UKIP	Plaid Cymru	Green	BNP	Other	Total
South East	23	71	20		2		1	0	0	117
London	37	20	14		0		2	0	1	75
North West	48	13	10		0		0	0	0	70
Scotland	34	7	10	7	0		0	0	1	59
West Midlands	32	16	8		2		0	0	1	59
Yorkshire	37	11	7		0		0	1	0	56
South West	12	21	17		2		0	0	0	52
East Midlands	21	16	7		1		0	0	0	44
Wales	25	6	5		0	3	0	0	1	40
North	26	5	5		0		0	0	0	36
East Anglia	5	13	4		0		0	0	0	22
TOTAL	**299**	**197**	**107**	**7**	**7**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**3**	**628**

Figure 1: How the Effective Number of Parties Compared in the European Election of 2004 and the General Election of 2005



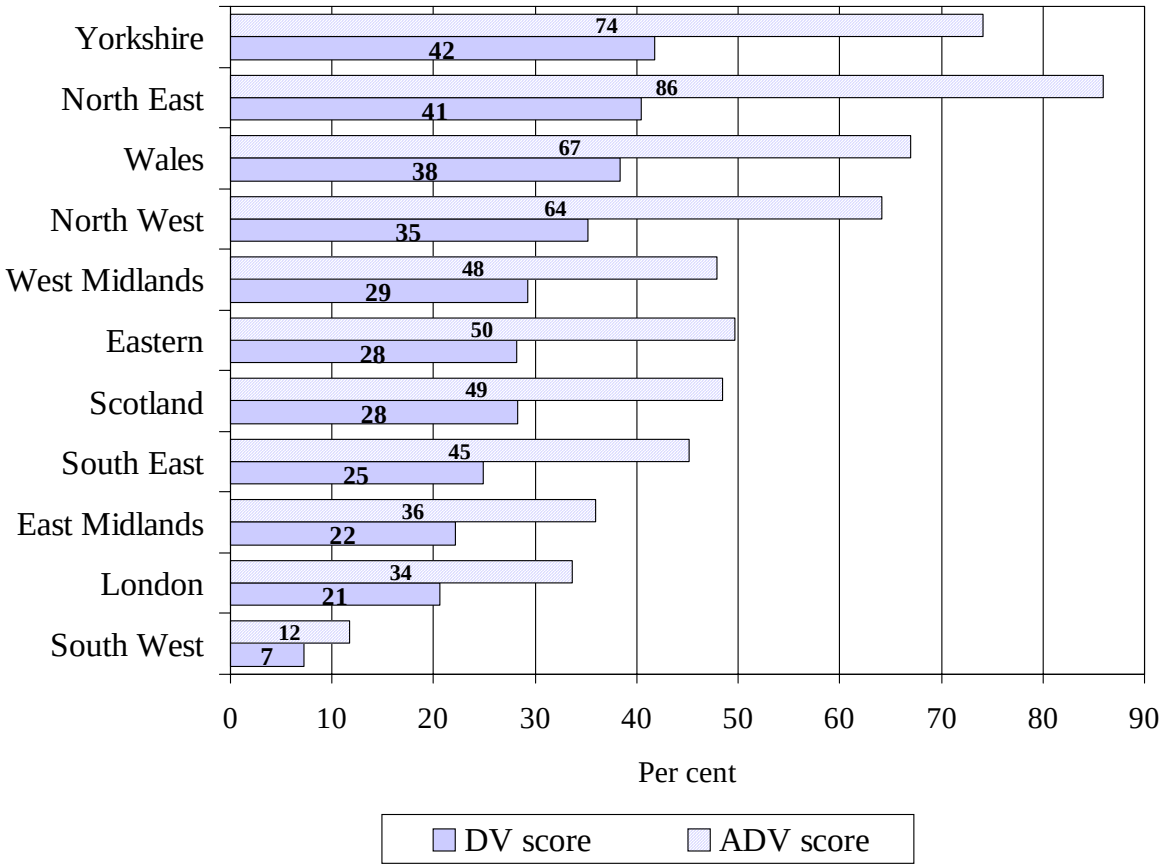
Notes: The pattern of background zones here show the area where the effective number of parties score can lie. The area marked 2 shows where ENP scores of 2.0 to 2.99 can lie. The area marked 3 shows the *additional* area where scores of 3.0 to 3.99 can lie: these 3 scores can also occur in virtually all of the 2 area, save for a small strip at the bottom too small to show visually. This pattern of including the zone(s) below then repeats for higher ENP scores. For a fuller explanation see P. Dunleavy and F. Boucek, 'Constructing the number of parties', *Party Politics*, (2003), vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 291-315. The data for 2004 are computed from the Electoral Commission's excellent and comprehensive volume, *The 2004 European Parliamentary Elections in the United Kingdom* (London: Electoral Commission, 2004).

Figure 2: The effective number of parties (ENP) for votes and for seats across the regions, Great Britain 2005



Key: E Eastern; EM East Midlands; L London; NE North East; NW North West; S Scotland; SE South East; SW South West; W Wales; WM West Midlands; YH Yorkshire and Humberside.

Figure 3: The pattern of deviation from proportionality (DV) and alternative deviation from proportionality (ADV) across the regions in Great Britain at the 2005 general election



1: The top eight parties' votes and regional ranking scores, Great Britain 2005

Party	GB % vote share	Average regional ranking score
Labour	36.4	3.27
Conservative	33.1	2.72
Liberal Democrat	22.6	2.27
UK Independence Party	2.5	0.64
Scottish National Party	1.5	0.16
Greens	1.0	0.09
British National Party	0.7	0.09
Plaid Cymru	0.6	0.09

Notes: The number of GB votes is rounded to the nearest hundred. The regional ranking scores derive from the fourth column of Table 2 below. We assign four points for a regional first place, three points for second place, two points for third place and one point for coming fourth.

2: Patterns of Multi-party Competition across Regions

Region	Lab + Con vote share (%)	Top party vote share (%)	Ranking of top four parties	Vote share of fourth and subsequent parties (%)	No. of parties above 1% support	No. of parties above 0.1 % support	Number of named parties competing
North East	76.2	52.9	L > LD > C > U	5.0	4	10	20
East Midlands	75.6	38.6	L > C > LD > U	5.3	4	11	17
North West	73.7	45.0	L > C > LD > U	5.0	5	13	27
West Midlands	73.7	38.9	L > C > LD > U	7.7	5	12	21
Eastern	73.1	43.3	C > L > LD > U	6.6	5	9	17
Yorkshire and Humberside	72.7	43.6	L > C > LD > B	5.1	6	12	23
South West	71.2	38.6	C > LD > L > U	6.0	5	9	22
London	70.8	38.9	L > C > LD > Gr	6.3	6	12	32
South East	69.4	45.0	C > L > LD > U	5.2	5	9	33
Wales	64.1	42.7	L > C > LD > PlC	17.5	5	11	17
Scotland	63.1	41.7	L > LD > SNP > C	20.2	6	11	22
England	***71.1***	***35.7***	***C > L > LD > U***	***6.0***	***5***	***7***	***79***
Great Britain	**69.5**	**36.4**	**L > C > LD > U**	**8.0**	**6**	**10**	**93**
UK	67.6	35.4	L > C > LD > U	10.4	5	12	102

Notes: L Labour; C Conservative: LD Liberal Democrat; U UKIP; SNP Scottish National Party; PlC Plaid Cymru; Gr Greens; B BNP. Number of parties above 1% or 0.1% *includes* independents. Number of 'named parties' *excludes* independents.

3: The relative reduction in parties (RRP) across regions, Great Britain 2005

	ENPvotes	ENPseats	RRP %
North East	2.7	1.2	57
Wales	3.6	1.6	56
Yorkshire and Humberside	3.1	1.6	51
North West	3.0	1.5	50
Scotland	3.6	1.9	48
Eastern	3.1	1.8	43
West Midlands	3.2	1.9	41
South East	3.1	1.8	40
East Midlands	3.1	2.0	34
London	3.3	2.2	32
South West	3.2	2.9	12
Great Britain	**3.4**	**2.3**	**31**
United Kingdom	3.6	2.5	31

4: Simulation Results Showing How a List PR system and Differently Structured Additional Member (AMS) Systems Would Work with the 2005 Voting Patterns in Great Britain

Regions	Lab	Con	Lib D	UKIP	SNP	Plaid Cymru	Green	BNP	Other	Total
Actual result	355	197	62	0	6	3	0	0	4	628
List PR	239	207	140	11	11	7	5	4	3	628
AMS 50% local/ 50% top-up	234	210	145	13	10	4	2	2	8	628
AMS 75% local, 25% top up	275	203	118	12	8	4	3	1	4	628
AMS Jenkins Commission (83% local,17% top up)	299	197	107	7	7	3	3	1	3	628

5: Winners as a percentage of all voters, Great Britain 2005

	Party Vote Choice				
	Lab	**Con**	**Lib Dem**	**Other parties**	**Total**
Triple winner	21.9	0	0	0	21.9
Double winner					
National/local	3.2	0	0	0	3.2
National/ regional	5.5	0	0	0	5.5
Regional/local	0	10.5	0	0	10.5
Single winner					
National	5.6	0	0	0	5.6
Regional	0	4.2	0	0	4.2
Local	0	6.3	4.9	0.7	11.9
Triple loser	0	12.2	17.8	7.2	37.2
All voters	**36.2**	**33.2**	**22.7**	**7.9**	**100**

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NOTES

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[1] The Independent, 10 May 2005, pp. 1 and 2. See also 'J. Curtice, 'System failure: All voters are equal, but some are more equal than others', p. 2 and S. O'Grady, 'While Britain lectures the world on democracy, others put it into practice', on p.3.

2 See Polly Toynbee, 'Hold your nose and vote Labour' *Guardian*, 13 April 2005

3 Polly Toynbee, 'Off with our nose pegs', *Guardian*, 29 April 2005. The strap line for this piece read: 'Our stinking voting system must be swept away – A PR revolution can make this the last election of no choice'.

[4] 4 Josep Colomer, 'It's parties that choose electoral systems (or, Duverger's Laws upside down)', *Political Studies*, 2005, vol. 53, pp. 1-21.

5 See P. Dunleavy and H. Margetts, 'From majoritarian to pluralist democracy: Electoral reform in Britain since 1997', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 2001, vol. 13, pp. 295-319: also part republished as 'United Kingdom: Reforming the Westminster Model', in J. Colomer (ed,), *Handbook of Electoral Choice* (Palgrave, 2004), pp. 294-305. Also see 'Facing up to multi-party politics: How partisan dealignment and PR voting have fundamentally changed Britain's party systems', *Parliamentary Affairs* (July 2005), forthcoming.

6 See P. Dunleavy, 'Political behaviour: Institutional and experiential approaches', in R. E. Goodin and H-D. Klingemann (eds), *A New Handbook of Political Science* (Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 276-393.

7 Dunleavy, 'Facing up to multi-party politics', *op cit*.

8 For a discussion of longer-term, historical trends in major party vote shares and governmental dominance, see P. Dunleavy, 'Electoral representation and accountability: the legacy of Empire', in A. Gamble, I. Holliday and G. Parry (eds) *Fundamentals in British Politics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 204-30.

9 Dunleavy, 'Facing up to multi-party politics', *op cit*.

10 To compute ENP we take the decimal vote shares of all the parties, square them and then add up the sum of the squared numbers. We then divide one by the resulting number to get

the ENP score. In fact, ENP is a much more complex index in its mathematical operations than this sounds, since it behaves in a non-linear way around certain key 'whole point' scores. For a fuller exposition of how the index works, see P. Dunleavy and F. Boucek, 'Constructing the number of parties', *Party Politics*, 2003, vol. 9, pp. 291-315.

11 For example, the area marked (5) shows where only ENP scores from 5.0 up to 5.99 may occur, but in addition scores of 5.0 up to 5.99 may also occur anywhere in the lower regions below 5, those marked for four, three or even two parties. In other words, as the ENP scores go upwards they can also spread downwards across a larger area of the diagram. See Dunleavy and Boucek, *op cit* for details.

12 This measure is simply computed as (the difference between the two scores times 100), divided by the ENP votes – that is, [(ENPvotes –ENPseats)*100]/ENPvotes. See R. Taagepera and M. Shugart, *Seats and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems* (Yale University Press, 1989), p. 273.

13 To compute it we first find the differences (deviations) between percentage votes shares and percentage seats shares for each party in a region (or the country at large). We then add up these differences counting the minus scores as positive (otherwise the deviations will sum to zero) and then divide the sum by two, because we would otherwise have double-counted across different parties the deviations. See Taagepera and Shugart, *Seats and Votes*, *op cit*, Chapter 10.

14 See Dunleavy and Margetts, 'The electoral system', *op cit*. for this effect in 1997; and P.Dunleavy and H. Margetts, 'The experiential approach to electoral system effects', in D. Beetham (ed.), *Indices of Democratization* (Sage, 1994), pp. 155-81, for cross-national evidence of similar results.

15 It is calculated by multiplying the DV score by 100 and then dividing it by the share of the votes going to the second and subsequent parties (which is most easily operationalised as 100 minus the vote of the largest party). Putting this more formally, ADV = (DV*100)/(100 – V_1), where DV is the conventional DV score and V_1 is the vote share of the largest party.

16 A score above 100 per cent is feasible in several ways, for example if all or most of the seats are won by the second largest party.

17 For earlier, more extensive and more sophisticated simulation work on the 1992 and 1997 elections, see P. Dunleavy, H. Margetts and S. Weir, *The Politico's Guide to Electoral Reform in Britain* (Politico's Publishing, 1998), and the same authors' *Making Votes Count 2: Mixed Electoral Systems* (Democratic Audit of the UK, 1998) and *Replaying the General Election of 1992: How Britain Would Have Voted Under Alternative Electoral Systems* (LSE Public Policy Group/Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, 1992); P, Dunleavy, H. Margetts, B. O'Duffy and S. Weir, *Making Votes Count: Replaying the 1990s General Elections Under Alternative Electoral Systems* (Democratic Audit of the UK, 1997).

18 Dunleavy, 'Facing up to multi-party politics', *op cit*., discusses in detail why it is that ESRC-funded British Election Studies have chronically, over a period of decades, failed to capture reliable data on the second, third, fourth and subsequent preferences of UK voters.

19 See Jenkins Commission, *The Report of the Independent Commission on the Voting System*, Cmnd 4090-I (Stationary Office); Dunleavy et al, *Politicos' Guide to Electoral Reform, op cit*., analyses the proposals in detail.

20 See P. Dunleavy and H. Margetts, 'How proportional are the British AMS systems?', *Representation*, 2004, vol. 40, pp. 317-29.

[21] Where unitary local authorities exist we have 'reincorporated' them for these purposes back into their historic county.

22 Dunleavy and Margetts, 'How proportional are the British AMS systems?', *op cit*.

[23] In 2004 some 34 per cent of London voters split their tickets across the five choices they had, two for Mayor, two for the Assembly and the European Parliament election. See Jennifer van Heerde, Helen Margetts and Patrick Dunleavy, 'Explaining Londoners' choices in the 2004 London elections', Paper to the Political Studies association's Annual Conference, University of Leeds, 4-7 April 2005.

[24] See the website http://stvforbc.com/ for the pro-reform campaign reactions.

25 For comparable 1992 and 1997 data see Dunleavy and Margetts, 'The Electoral system', *op cit*., pp.744-6. Unfortunately this calculation is not available for 2001 at this time.

[26] At the time of writing there was no Electoral Commission data available on postal voting, but the BBC reported on 27 April 2005 that shortly before the election the Commission estimated that some 6.5 million people had applied for postal votes, compared with just 1.7 million in 2001. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/vote_2005/frontpage/4484485.stm In 2001 the proportion of postal vote applicants who actually voted was 81 per cent, around 22 per cent more than general turnout. So applying this ratio we could expect postal votes to go up from around 1.4 million in 2001 to 5.2 million in 2005. Of this projected increase of 3.9 million votes, one fifth or around 780,000 could be seen as an 'artificial' increase.