

Introduction

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The late twentieth century was a time of global democratization. Between 1974 and 2000, the number of democracies world-wide increased from 39 to 120 (Diamond, 1999; Freedom House, 2000a). However, comparative studies on democratic development in different continents paint a clear picture: the global trend of democratization was weakest in Asia (Croissant, forthcoming). Annual reports of the United States-based Freedom House Institute, for instance, show that in terms of political and civil rights, Asia even lags behind Africa, a region notorious for its record of authoritarian regimes and human rights violations (Freedom House, 2000a; Emminghaus and Nord, 2000; Karatnycky, 2000).

Freedom House's data as well as several case studies¹ disclose two trends of political development in Pacific Asia in the last 25 years: First, democratization processes are fragile. During the 1970s and 1980s, many endangered and unstable democratic regimes developed, which often fluctuated between democracy and dictatorship. It was not until the early 1990s that the data indicated a trend toward stable democracy. Second, new democracies exhibit one common characteristic: at the end of each transition stands the institutionalization of the model of representative democracy. In representative democracies, elections and electoral systems are of crucial importance because elections are the most significant mechanism for citizens to exercise their rights of political participation; and the electoral system is the main institution for transforming political preferences, expressed by votes, into political representation.

Because most democracies in Asia show significant deviations in form and substance when compared to liberal democracy in Western Europe and North America, the liberal and even democratic character of these regimes is often doubted (Neher and Marlay, 1995; Zakaria, 1997: 22-43; Aquino, 1998: 1; Jones, 1998: 147; Hewison, 1999). Depending on the observer's theoretical preferences, analytical tools and, last but not least, his/her normative ideals, democracies in Asia are classified as 'Asian-style democracy' (Neher and Marlay, 1995), 'illiberal democracy' (Bell et al., 1995) or 'Confucian democracy' (Chaibong, 1995: 343). Because of a lack of space, we cannot discuss this point at length.

1. Since the early 1970s, Freedom House has compiled an index of political regimes which is composed of two partial indices: the Political Rights Index and the Civil Rights Index. Both range from one to seven points (the higher the score, the lower the quality of political and civil rights in a system). Together these two indices can be seen as an indicator for liberal democracy. Once again, the lower the score, the higher the level of democratic constitutionalism. For methodology see Emminghaus and Nord, 2000: 167 and Schmidt, 2000: 408. For an overview see Croissant, forthcoming; Hewison, 1999: 224.

However, what is notable is that there is a decisive difference between countries such as South Korea, Taiwan or Thailand, for example, and other political systems in Southeast and East Asia, i.e. the People's Republic of China, Vietnam, Myanmar and North Korea: the former conduct multi-party elections to fill seats in their legislatures and to recruit governments, whereas the latter do not. Therefore, this book starts from the observation that multi-party elections are a common and meaningful element of the institutional architecture of many countries in Asia at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Approach and Goals of This Book

This book examines a topic that is ambiguous in title and complex: that of the role of elections and electoral systems – taken together as electoral politics – for political development in Southeast and East Asia. Some years ago, Arend Lijphart noted that '[a]mong the most important constitutional choices that have to be made in democracies [is] the choice of the electoral system, especially majoritarian election methods versus proportional representation [...]' (1994: 202). However, the electoral system is always embedded in the broader institutional context of a democratic system. Therefore the effects of this constitutional choice must be explored within the broader structural architecture of social and political systems. All the studies in this volume follow this rather broad research strategy.

The aim of this book is to discuss the following three overarching questions:

1. Which electoral systems can be found in the region?
2. Do elections and electoral systems contribute to democratic development in Pacific Asia?
3. How can institutional reforms strengthen sustainable democratic development in different Asian countries?

This book addresses these questions on a theoretical level and on an empirical level. The centre of each analysis deals with the question of which institutional reforms offer promising paths for sustaining the quality of elections and democratic rule in general. It is clear that there is no universal master plan for institutional reform. Each proposal has to take into account the specific conditions and contexts of a given society and its cultural and political system. In addition, the authors and contributors to this volume agree with the statement that institutions matter; however, we do not think that only political institutions matter. Institutions are located in a broader social fabric. Culture, economics, history and agents also matter.

So why choose electoral systems and elections as the point of reference? The selection of this criterion is reasonable if one assumes that elections are '*the*

democratic method' of choosing representatives by the people (Nohlen, 1990: 17).² Elections are the defining principle of a democracy. Elections are a key criterion for fixing the threshold that separates autocracies from polyarchies. Even the most influential definition of democracy during the last three decades – Robert Dahl's concept of 'polyarchy' – includes this assumption: Polyarchy, according to Dahl the realistic form of democracy, is 'contestation open to participation' (1971: 5). Dahl defines polyarchy by the two interdependent dimensions of political participation (of citizens) and contestation (of the elite). The open and competitive access to power exercised through the correct and regular holding of elections, based on a universal active and passive franchise, is the *conditio sine qua non* of democracy. It is clear that this criterion does not allow a differentiation between fragile and consolidated democracies. Democracies that are consolidated, liberal and based on the rule of law, as well as 'hybrid regimes' (Karl, 1995: 72), in which political rights and civil liberties are massively violated, are characterized by this criterion. Even in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, the holding of elections is an often-used ritual of political legitimization and self-affirmation by the ruling class. However, we do think that elections and the electoral system are an important element of democracy. The reform of electoral systems can improve the quality of elections as well as in some sense the democratic quality of the political system. Therefore, we believe analysis of the electoral dimension of political systems can give valuable insights into the political dynamics of societies and the prospects for further democratic development.

Analytical Framework

Based on these considerations, the following five questions arise:

1. What is the general function of elections and electoral systems, and which functions do they have in different political settings?
2. How can we classify electoral systems and how can we order them typologically?
3. How can we measure the democratic quality of elections?
4. Which research criteria can be developed to analyse the role elections play in the process of political transformation?
5. Which institutional reforms can we pursue in order to improve the democratic quality of elections and electoral systems?

Functions of Elections and Electoral Systems

Elections are a necessary but not sufficient condition for democracy. Democracy requires more than just elections. Representative democracies, however, depend crucially on elections. Elections are not only supposed to reflect the will of the

2. Italics are the author's own.

people and integrate citizens into the political process, but also to legitimize and check the power of the government. The essential means of attaining these objectives is the electoral system.

But what are the guiding principles of the electoral process? We can identify a specific concept of representation behind each existing electoral system. They concern us only in so far as they are based on the fundamental principles of universal and equal votes. The two principles must be obeyed in order to safeguard the equal representation of the people. Another important question in every representative and democratic system is in what ways the electoral system obstructs or promotes the integration of voters and social groups into political parties (Nohlen, 1990: 45) and the formation of a parliament and government able to legislate and to govern.

Three functional demands can be discerned: representation, integration and decision. First, elections ought to represent the people and the political will of voters. Representativeness is a prerequisite for the legitimating power of elections; legitimacy is crucial in a democratic constitutional state, where all state power is derived from the people; the legitimacy of political power itself needs to be refreshed periodically by elections in order to be in effect. The regular holding of elections also makes possible regular political control of the ruling elite by the electorate. The functional demand of representation requires an electoral system to be sufficiently proportional so as to achieve an adequate conversion of the range of pluralistic social interests into political mandates (*representativeness*). Second, elections ought to integrate the people. Following the German constitutional theorist Robert Smend (1968: 154), it is most important that the electoral system leads to the formation of political parties and brings about majorities, not just single representatives. How well these functions are fulfilled is strongly influenced by the electoral system (*party-building*). Third, the electoral system has to generate majorities large enough to ensure the stability of government and its ability to govern (*governability*).

The effect of the electoral system on the representativeness of the political system depends on the degree of proportionality to which votes are translated into political representation. From this it follows that the distribution of seats has to reflect appropriately the political will of the electorate as it is expressed in elections.

Besides more general representativeness, there is also the question of whether and how the representation of social groups and pluralist interests is promoted or blocked by the electoral system. There are two branches to this. The first is institutions which are supposed to guarantee a certain level of political representation for particular groups or strata: women, aborigines, ethnic or religious minorities, etc. Here the task is not only to examine which sets of rules exist, but also to examine day-to-day workings. The second is social

inclusiveness. The question here is to what extent the nomination of candidates and elected institutions comply with the ideal of democratic representation. In other words, do elections have the effect of recruiting incumbents out of different social classes and functional groups? Or, do they lead to the oligopolization of the access to political office by privileged groups, and thereby become a means to guarantee privileges? In order to examine this question the socio-demographic background of candidates and representatives has to be analysed.

With regard to the integration of the political will of the people into political parties and political majorities, two effects of the political system are interesting. First, to what extent do electoral systems affect the process of party formation; and second, to what extent do electoral systems contribute to the formation of political majorities? Electoral regulations affect political parties with regard to the conditions of campaigning as well as to the feedback between the will of the people and the state outside of elections; the communicative function of parties has to be protected from serious disturbances. The work of parties on the local level has to be guaranteed in particular. With regard to the link between party and electoral system therefore, it has to be examined whether the electoral system stabilizes the party system.

A number of political scientists argue that the relevance of political parties is about to decline. Philippe C. Schmitter (1995: 15) has called this phenomenon part of the emergence of a 'post-liberal democracy'.³ Party memberships are decreasing in established Western democracies, while the critical distance of citizens from parties increases, and a wide variety of new social movements and organizations of civil society offers citizens new opportunities for political participation. Movement-style political organizations, e.g. in Italy or some Latin American countries (Colombia, Venezuela), are shaking the decades-old structures of party systems. In the new democracies in Eastern Europe and East Asia, problems with establishing integrative, representative and programmatic parties are almost the rule (Croissant, 1997: 293; Merkel, 1997). In these regions 'cartel parties' (Katz and Mair, 1995: 1-20) and 'hovering party systems', where the electorate and the organizational structure are hardly linked to each other, dominate the political landscape. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that in no region has a functional equivalent for parties been identified so far. Political parties are still the dominating political players almost everywhere. Therefore, the 'party forming' function of electoral systems is still relevant.⁴

In order to evaluate the influence of the electoral system on the governability of the political system we have to estimate how much it promotes the efficient formation of government. It is obvious that this function cannot be analysed in isolation from the form of government. In parliamentary systems like Thailand's, the majoritarian effects of the electoral system are directly connected with the

3. For a broader discussion see the concluding chapter by Aurel Croissant.

4. For a broader discussion see Croissant and Merkel, 2001 and the concluding chapter by Aurel Croissant.

formation of government, because the political majority in parliament generates the government. Presidential systems, such as that in the Philippines, use two electoral systems, which also duplicate this function. While the electoral system for the presidency has a direct effect on the formation of government, the electoral system for parliament influences this process only very indirectly (e.g. the United States of America). In systems of government such as those in Taiwan and South Korea, both electoral systems are important for the formation of a government: elections of parliament affect the formation of government more significantly than in presidential systems, but less than in parliamentary systems. The formation of majorities in parliament has at least a hypothetical influence on the composition of government, because the parliament elects the prime minister.

In totalitarian systems without political pluralism, elections do not influence the composition of government. The political principle of party leadership as well as the legitimacy of the government is based on the ideology of the ruling party. Therefore, elections take place at irregular intervals (e.g. North Korea). They only serve the purpose of mobilizing all social forces under the supremacy of the Communist Party in order to confirm and consolidate the unity of the people, and to demonstrate the identity of workers and party. This is expressed most clearly in the extraordinarily high rate of participation and strong patterns of consent.

While the analysis of electoral systems and elections in totalitarian systems seems fruitless, the analysis of authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes, 'pseudo democracies' (Diamond, 1999), can be a valuable exercise. Although elections in authoritarian regimes also do not regulate the distribution of political power, they at least offer opportunities for the limited articulation of opposition. Under some circumstances, in Taiwan for instance, they can provide opportunities for the socialization of democratic patterns of behaviour, and for recruiting political staff on a sub-national level before democratization on the national level comes into perspective. Elections therefore can be an important element within an incremental and gradual development towards democracy. Even in those cases where elections do not fulfil the function of government formation, they can be an offshoot of democracy by promoting the distribution and internalization of democratic views.⁵ Eventually the election process can develop a dynamic, not intended nor calculated by the authoritarian elite. If the election process becomes self-dynamic, as happened in Thailand in 1992 and to some extent in South Korea in 1985, there is a good chance that events will literally sweep away the dictatorship in the aftermath of the elections (Murray, 1996; Croissant, 1998).

Generally speaking, elections in authoritarian regimes have the function of stabilizing the system. Their purpose is to legitimize the established patterns of

5. See, for examples, *The China Quarterly*, 2000.

political power. Nevertheless, this function is difficult to realize because, in contrast to totalitarian regimes, elections in authoritarian regimes enable the articulation of dissenting opinions. Given that the regime cannot rely upon a sufficient base of support, it has to fall back on the use of fraud and manipulation of elections in order to get the intended vote. However, there is a higher risk for authoritarian regimes that such practices will be exposed, which could in turn lead to a further delegitimization of the regime. In addition, elections in authoritarian regimes often serve the purpose of easing tensions within the system by offering the opposition a controlled channel for the articulation of criticism. By channelling discontent into the institutions of the regime, and thereby keeping it away from the streets, disputes can take place within the regime's own rules of the game; the options of the opposition are thus restricted significantly. Whether such a strategy is successful depends naturally on the social, political and economic context in which elections take place. The strategy of a partial integration of the opposition in elections may be appropriate if the objective performance of the dictatorship is good and public support for the regime is significant; but elections can also turn into a 'window of opportunity' for democratic agents. In the case of an actual and rapid decline of legitimacy, opposition and dissident factions within the regime itself may take this opportunity to turn away from the authoritarian leadership. This happened, for instance, in Indonesia between 1997 and 1999.⁶

Finally, elections always serve the purpose of producing an external reputation. This end has to be satisfied the more a regime relies upon the support of foreign democratic actors. If this goal has a high priority – for example, in the case of the election-like referendum on independence in East-Timor – only moderate manipulation of the election process and the results is possible. The presence of foreign observers and media would be dangerous for a regime concerned about the election process slipping out of the hands of the elite. It follows from here that elections are supposed to have different functions for different regimes. To analyse the functions of elections it is clear that we have to take the broader institutional and procedural context of electoral systems into account. Therefore, an appropriate empirical analysis also requires a broader examination of the architecture of power within a given regime.

Types and Classifications

In principle, two basic types of electoral system can be identified, under which almost all real electoral systems can be classified. Within the immense diversity of real existing democracies, both types often occur in combination, while the logic of one type is predominant (Nohlen and Kasapovic, 1996: 19). Classified according to the electoral formula, those two types are the plurality system and the proportional system. Based on their effects on the votes-seats, relation as well as some additional combinations of technical elements (district magnitude,

6. For Indonesia's recent democratic development see the chapter on Indonesia by Hermawan Sulistyio in this book; also Case, 2000: 51 and Dosch, 2000a: 16-23.

electoral thresholds, supplementary seats, etc.), we can differentiate ten subtypes of electoral system.

Table 1: Types of Electoral System

Plurality Systems	Proportional Systems
1. Plurality System in SMCs	1. PR in MMCs
2. Majority-Plurality in SMCs	2. Compensatory PR with Threshold
3. Plurality System with Minority Representation (including SNTV)	3. Personalized PR with Threshold
4. Plurality System in MMCs	4. SNTV System
5. Plurality System with Proportional List (including Segmented System)	5. Pure PR

SMC - Single-member Constituency; MMC - Multi-member Constituency; PR - Proportional Representation; SNTV - Single Non-transferable Vote System
Source: Nohlen, 2000: 180.

The different technical elements of an electoral system can combine in various ways. Depending on the particular combination, both basic types may generate very different outcomes. However, with a view to the fundamental functions of electoral systems, the two types can be easily distinguished:

- While proportional systems aim at reflecting the political will of the electorate as far as possible, plurality (first-past-the-post) systems try to generate solid majorities in order to secure stable governments. The first emphasizes the representation of the political will of the people, whereas the latter focuses on the concentration of this will into political majorities (Nohlen and Kasapovic, 1996: 18; Sartori, 1994).
- With regard to representativeness, we can again differentiate between both systems: the proportional system tries, at least principally, to represent exactly all political opinions within parliament. The plurality system focuses on the representation of local units and their interests. Therefore, it produces at first local majorities within constituencies. Majorities on the national level are a derivative of the local majorities.

Proportional representation thus tends to grant a more proportional transfer of votes into mandates (higher representation); it puts more emphasis on representation than plurality systems. Plurality systems put more weight on integration and decision.⁷ Once again it is clear that empirical analysis requires more than a mere classification of existing systems. Careful examination of how a particular electoral system combines elements of both types, how the technical elements of the electoral system are arranged and what corresponding regulations are formulated concerning the organization and activities of political parties and social organizations, is necessary.

7. As an overview see Sartori, 1994.

Electoral Quality

Following Axel Hadenius (1992: 42), an election is classified as democratic when it is 'meaningful'. The term 'meaningful' refers to three criteria: openness, correctness and effectiveness of the election. It is clear that all three criteria have to be fulfilled not only on election day, but also during the election campaign and the period of vote-counting. Finally, it means that elected officials really can take office.

Openness of elections means that access to the election is open to every citizen (universal suffrage), that there is a principle choice between real political alternatives (competitive candidatures) and that the result has not been fixed a priori (Hadenius, 1992: 42). Open access means that the suffrage rights are really universal, that is, all citizens have the right to vote. It is not a contradiction that in democracies the right to vote regularly requires that certain minimal conditions have to be met (for instance mental health). Exclusion from the 'demos' has to be bound to impersonal and non-discriminatory criteria and should not be subject to the arbitrary decisions of political authorities. Also connected to this is the principle of equal vote, which means that all votes count the same. Besides giving every voter an equal vote, this principle is also relevant for the technical organization of electoral systems.

Elections are competitive only when *de jure* and *de facto* no limitations are set in order to exclude certain candidates or groups for political reasons. Furthermore, voters must have the choice between meaningful political alternatives; the conditions of competition have to be the same for all candidates in the sense of a 'levelled playing field' (Elklit and Svensson, 1997: 32.) The single most important aspect here is discrimination with respect to the banning of political parties. Whether and in what way a democracy has the right to protect itself 'preventively' against enemies of the democratic order by banning 'anti-system parties' or excluding them from elections (Sartori, 1976) is controversial. For our purposes, it is sufficient to classify the electoral contest as free and competitive as long as all groups who are not hostile to the democratic order can participate (Hadenius, 1992: 43).

The criterion of 'correctness' aims at the registration and identification of voters, the election campaign and the election procedure in a stricter sense: all candidates must have access to state and private media on the basis of equal legal standards; the state apparatus has to be politically neutral when organizing elections (Nohlen, 1990; Bausback, 1998; Elklit, 1999: 26). Finally, for giving a meaningful expression to the sovereignty of the people, elections have to be 'effective'. This means that the legislature and – in presidential systems – the presidential office have to be filled solely by elections (Elklit, 1994: 93). This principle is violated when access to the central positions of power is regulated only partially or not at all by elections (Hadenius, 1992: 40; Gastil, 1993: 26), but is by simple (self) appointment. This criterion requires

furthermore that the electoral system adequately translates voters' preferences into seats. This measures the degree of disproportionality of an electoral system.

Meaningful political participation of citizens for the purpose of the vertical legitimacy of political power and the accountability of political authorities to citizens also needs additional effective political rights. The right of political organization and activity must not be withheld from any group loyal to the democratic order,⁸ citizens must enjoy the right to form and act freely in associations independent from the state (Hadenius, 1992: 51). Elections defined as a meaningful expression of the will of the people require furthermore that before and after elections certain rights are effective. These are the right of freedom of speech, the right of demonstration, the right of information and the right of freedom of the press, and they are necessary for the formulation of political opinions, the circulation of political views and the control of the political process. The spreading as well as the receiving of information and news should not be subject to politically motivated restrictions. The freedom of the press and the freedom of information should be guaranteed by an independent judiciary. This aspect therefore deals with the evaluation of the quality of elections within the broader context of the complete political system.

Research Criteria

The questions dealt with so far are more of theoretical and analytical interest. They build the conceptual starting-point for this book. Based on this background are five groups of questions, which form together the heuristic framework for the country studies. The five research topics are:

1. Historical development
2. Contemporary system
3. Performance of the contemporary system
4. Contribution to democratic participation and governance
5. Institutional reforms

1. Historical Development

This topic makes provision for the sketching of the research objective in its chronological dimension. However, the question here goes further than describing the institutional framework. It also asks what functions electoral systems have had in the past, what problems occurred in the context of the given system, which actors were responsible for the design of the electoral system and which actors influenced the implementation of elections and participated in them:

8. See also Dahl, 1989: 221.

1.1 Development, Performance and Agents

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mode of introduction- Mode of reform- Concrete features
Organization and conduct of elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Agents- Institutional framework
Continuity of electoral systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Regularity- Dynamics of development- Acceptance of the rules- Acceptance of the results- Significance of manipulations
Realization of principles and normative ideals of democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Party formation- Representation performance- Integration performance- Majority formation/government formation- Contribution to democratic development
Representation of territorially based interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Participation of political parties- Structure of the party system
Representation of functionally defined interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Broader context of social interest structure- Socio-demographic patterns of candidates/elected authorities- Position of other relevant agents with respect to elections
The media and the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Realization of political rights necessary for meaningful political participation- Public discourse on electoral systems

1.2 Socio-economic Context

Social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Social problems- Social cleavages
Economic context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Poverty- Social disparities- Economic inequality- Principle features of the economic system
Stateness context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Problems of stateness- Problems of nation-building- Experiences with colonial rule- Foreign policy context

2. Contemporary System

In addition to the historical embeddedness, we have to deal with the question of how the *current* electoral system can be classified. In most cases, the electoral system is not the first but a very recent one. While the former section outlines the historical development, this section describes the immediate past and the present state of the electoral system and its reforms. It is highly relevant to put the concrete history of the origin of the electoral system at the beginning of this section. Special significance has to be attached to the motives and strategic options of the actors during the legislation process of the electoral system.

2.1 Mode of Introduction of the Current System

Modes of introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Democratization- Reform in an established democracy- Partial reform or new beginning
Political context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Relevant players- Constellation of agents- Interests and motives

2.2 Institutional Patterns

Technical criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provisions for candidature- Provisions for organizing elections- Provisions concerning other relevant aspects
Typological classification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Plurality or proportional rule- Combinations

3. Performance of the Contemporary System

This dimension focuses on the relative performance of the electoral system. Based on the research criteria formulated above, the performance of the electoral system in central functional areas has to be evaluated. On the one hand, quantitative indicators have to be applied. On the other hand, explicit reference to the conditions of the social and institutional context is considered a valuable instrument for evaluating the relative functionality of the electoral system. A second, separate question is the meaning of elections as an instrument for democratic participation. To be considered here are the intensity and quality of participation as well as the quality of the election process.

3.1 Performance

Representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Proportionality- Mode for candidate selection- Realization of affirmative rules concerning the representation of social groups- Socio-demographic background of elected officials
Inclusiveness/Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Party formation- Majority formation
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- System of governance and regime type- Social context- Economic context

3.2 Participation

Level of participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Voters' participation- Candidates' participation- Interest of voters in campaigning/elections
Motivation for participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Political attitudes of the voters concerning political parties and elections- Motives for voters' decisions- Links between voters and candidates

3.3 Election Quality

Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Openness of the elections- Effectiveness of the elections
Significance of deficits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Organizational deficits- Fraud, vote-buying and other abuses- Political violence

4. Contribution to Democratic Participation and Governance

Since elections are not an end in themselves, their functionality has to be evaluated within the broader context of the political system. On the one hand, it is essential to test whether elections promote the expression of the will of the people and the legitimacy of the political system. On the other hand, the consequences of elections and the electoral system for the political system as a whole have to be evaluated (for instance, good governance). The use of quantitative indicators is not an adequate method. A qualitative analysis is therefore advisable:

- On the demand side, the question is how voters themselves perceive elections. Do they demand or evaluate elections as an effective instrument for the independent participation of the individual? Are there alternative mechanisms for deliberation and interest representation? On the supply side of political candidates, the question of whether the openness of the electoral process is given with a view to programmatic diversity and political agenda-setting has to be answered.
- What are the consequences of elections and electoral systems with regard to the efficiency and effectiveness of political institutions and decisions? Do they lead to a misallocation of political resources and to the emergence of competing decision majorities within the institutions of the system of government; or are they effective transition belts, that reconnect the will of the voters to political decision-making processes in the form of controlling regular abuses of power and sanctioning wastage of resources? Do they lead therefore to 'anticipated reactions' (Friedrich, 1946), which support qualitative improvement of political decisions?

5. Institutional Reforms

The issue of electoral reform and its contribution to more democratic representation and participation enjoys particular attention and is also the centre of a controversy in Southeast and East Asia. Various young democracies in the region, for instance, are attempting to reform the institutional access to political decision-making by reforming the voting rights of underprivileged social groups such as women and ethnic or religious minorities. Examples are the special party-list system aimed at an increasing representation of so-called marginalized groups in the Philippines,⁹ the separate list system for Overseas Chinese communities and reserved seats for representatives of indigenous minorities in Taiwan, and extra seats in the legislative assembly for women in Bangladesh.¹⁰

The discussion about reform options has to include the following points:

- **Government system**
How do reforms of the electoral system affect the working of the government system?
- **Social context**
Are preferred reforms reasonable concerning the given social and economic conditions, and what social/economic reforms would be needed?
- **Cultural context**
What are the chances of realizing reforms concerning cultural contexts?
How can cultural traditions be integrated into reform proposals?

9. See the chapter by Julio Teehankee.

10. As an overview about electoral provisions see Nohlen, Grotz and Hartmann, 2001.

- **Acceptance of reform proposals**

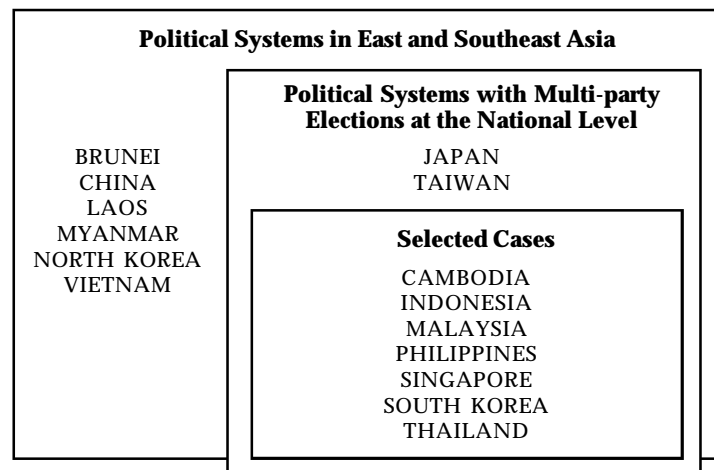
What is the political preference of decision-making elites?

How can the discourse on electoral reforms be strengthened?

The Structure of the Book

At the outset of putting together a book about electoral politics one has to make a decision about which cases to include. This volume examines seven cases, which are, in alphabetical order, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand. This sample includes almost half of the political systems in East and Southeast Asia. However, the fundamental and necessary condition which a political system must have met to be included in this book is conducting multi-party elections at the national level. When those political systems which do not meet this condition are excluded, the total number of possible cases shrinks to nine. Seven out of nine cases is a representative and appropriate sample.

Figure 1: Systematic Map of East and Southeast Asia



Still, the diversity of political regimes and electoral systems is immense. On the one side are three new, but in some sense 'old', democracies of the most recent wave of democratization in Pacific Asia. While the Philippines and South Korea are sometimes even referred to as successful cases of democratic consolidation,¹¹ Thailand adopted some constitutional reforms in 1997 and 1998 which are considered by most observers as a major step towards democratic deepening and consolidation. This view might be too optimistic. Nevertheless,

11. See the chapter of Orathai Kokpol in this book; also Croissant and Dosch, 2001.

these political systems are at least 'electoral democracies'.¹² Of all the political regimes in Pacific Asia (with the exception of Japan) they come closest to the 'Western' model of liberal democracy. Each of these countries has made significant progress in democratic development since democratization in 1986 in the case of the Philippines, 1988 in the case of Korea and 1992 in the case of Thailand; elections are the accepted method of selecting political leaders.

On the other side is Cambodia. After nearly 30 years of civil war, with very few economic resources and a political culture still shaped by the memories of the wars and the tyranny of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia probably faces the most difficult circumstances for developing a working democracy in Southeast Asia. Cambodia is still one of the poorest countries in the region. However, its political stability and the capacity of its political leaders to act has improved. After fighting between the military groups of the two coalition partners, the royalist party FUNCINPEC and the ex-Communist Cambodian People's Party in 1997 – seen by some observers both inside and outside Cambodia as a 'coup' by Second Prime Minister Hun Sen against First Prime Minister, Prince Ranariddh (Dosch, 2000a) – political stability increased recently. National elections were held in June 1998 after the Japanese government, the European Union and the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) pressured the Cambodian government to do so. In March 1999, the government of Prime Minister Hun Sen committed itself to initiating democratic reforms, improving human rights standards, fighting corruption in politics and bureaucracy, as well as starting economic reforms. Meanwhile, Cambodia became a member of ASEAN and several foreign governments and international donors pledged to give development assistance to the country. Because the conflict between the government of Cambodia and the United Nations over the question of how to deal with the leaders of the former Khmer Rouge is still not resolved, the pace of democratic reform is very slow. However, the local elections of February 2002 might become a major step towards democratic reforms.

More 'advanced' are democratic reforms in Indonesia. After the fall of the sultanistic regime of President Suharto in 1998, Indonesia began initiating major political and economic reforms, which have started to lead the country from autocratic towards democratic rule. Elections were a major element in this still open and uncertain transition (Malley, 2000: 153-180; Dosch, 2000b: 213). Malaysia and Singapore, the other cases included in this book, are described by some Western observers, as well as by some Asian researchers, as models of 'soft authoritarianism', or at best 'blocked' or 'limited democracies'.¹³ While some see both as (unusual) members of the 'democratic club',¹⁴ others argue that since 'civil and political freedoms are so constrained in these two countries that the minimum criterion of electoral democracy (a sufficiently levelled

12. From different points of view and with different conclusions see Thompson, 1996: 127; Sanders and Reinecke, 2000; Bunte, 2000; Croissant, 1998; Croissant, forthcoming.

13. For an overview see Emmerson, 1995: 223; Vennewald, 1994.

14. See Emmerson, 1995; also Yeo and Lim in this volume.

electoral playing field to give opposition parties a chance at victory) is not met' (Diamond, 1999: 289, footnote 58), we should not classify either as democracies. This phrase hints that the question about being a democracy or not has to be decided after an in-depth analysis of the real working of the electoral process. This important question alone is reason enough to include these two cases in this book.

Table 2: Electoral Systems in Southeast and East Asia

Country	Political Status	Regular Elections	Elections as Only Method*	Type of Electoral System#
Cambodia	Non-democracy	Yes	De facto restricted	PR in MMC
Indonesia	Democracy in transition	Yes	Restricted (reserved seats for the military)	PR in MMC
Malaysia	Semi-democracy	Yes	Since 1960s	Plurality System in SMC
Philippines	Democracy	Yes	Since 1987	Segmented System
Singapore	Semi-democracy	Yes	Since 1960s	Plurality System in SMC and MMC
S. Korea	Democracy	Yes	Since 1988	Segmented System
Thailand	Democracy	Yes	Since 2000	Plurality System in MMC (until 1998); Segmented System (since 1998)

* Elections as only method for filling seats in legislature and recruiting government

PR - Proportional Representation; MMC - Multi-member Constituency; SMC - Single-member Constituency
Sources: Compilation by the author according to information provided in this book; Freedom House, 2000b; Nohlen, 2000: 255 (Table 1).

In the process of compiling this book, we were intensely aware of the limitations that space and other factors imposed on us. Some of the themes raised in this introduction are dealt with more extensively in the following chapters, while other equally important aspects had to be discussed only cursorily. Though each case is characterized by distinctive features that require specific attention, all studies are based on the same general analytical framework outlined above.

This volume brings several researchers from different countries in Asia and abroad together. Most of the authors are citizens of the countries about which they write. This means that they have a vital interest in improving the standards of election quality there. Therefore, for most of the authors, writing these papers was not only an academic exercise but also a way of influencing their own 'life-world'. In this sense, the foreword to the first chapter on Cambodia, written by *Kassie Neou*, a member of the Cambodian National Election Commission of

Cambodia, is not only an academic piece but also a discursive element of the democratic reform process itself. While Cambodia's political system remains in flux, electoral politics is still far from a 'normal' political game, as the analysis of electoral politics in Cambodia by *Jeffrey Gallup* clearly shows. The record of democratic transition is mixed. Over the last ten years there have been remarkable successes in reducing political violence, improving state power and even in the settlement of ideological conflicts between numerous political groups. However, the electoral system has not acquired the status of a generally accepted institution, nor 'has it become the reliable instrument of a particular party in its quest for power'. Therefore it seems fair to conclude that the 'prospects for the survival and development of Cambodian democracy are uncertain'. However, as Gallup also shows, there is the opportunity to bring transition to a successful end. Whether this opportunity is used depends not only on the strategies of domestic political agents but also on the policies of foreign organizations.

Hermawan Sulisty discusses the hard way to democracy in Indonesia and the role of elections and the electoral system in the process of transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. The paper examines the 1999 general elections but with an eye to earlier experiences with electoral politics and the need for broader institutional reforms. Sulisty's chapter then illustrates the problems that may exist for democratic transformation at various institution sets in Indonesia and reminds us that the intention of external supporters may not always be fulfilled in the outcome: while external organizations and institutions may prefer introducing a proportionally representative system as the key to political integration in a plural society, for many Indonesian scholars the lack of political accountability of elected representatives to their constituents is a source of disappointment. So, a plurality system in single-member constituencies may be a better institutional solution to some of the problems of Indonesia's democracy, because what the proportional system actually provides is at odds with what Indonesians aspire to and expect from elections.

The next chapter by *Lim Hong Hai* explores the historical developments, motives, structures and results of 'managed elections' in Malaysia. He shows that political mobilization in Malaysia follows the lines of ethnic division. In a plural society like Malaysia, the electoral system is under extreme pressure to become an instrument of the power struggle among political parties representing particular ethnic groups. Also mal-apportionment in favour of rural areas and the Malay population is a means of ensuring ethnic political dominance within the ruling party alliance UMNO, as well as within the political system in general. Malay opposition parties also profit from this. Therefore mal-apportionment and district gerrymandering is not so much a method to secure the political dominance of a specific party or coalition, but an instrument to balance difficult ethnic relations. As Lim argues, the opposition complains that the problem with elections is not 'vote rigging', cheating, or open manipulation of the electoral process, but what they call 'pre-rigging', especially

constituency delineation. And the problem with elections and the electoral system is not the restriction of the free use of franchise rights or a deficit of fairness when election time comes. Rather, it is, according to Lim, with reference to other authors, the distortion of the 'one-man-one-vote-one-value principle', due to ethnic gerrymandering and weightage of votes. His conclusion is, therefore, that voters in Malaysia are free to cast their vote, but the electoral system itself is not fair. However, one has to keep in mind that Malaysia is a society of extreme religious, ethnic and cultural heterogeneity. Compared with other plural societies in the region as well as outside the region, Malaysia's 'limited democracy' is able to guarantee a high degree of political stability and peaceful relations among communal groups within the multinational state. This is one of the reasons why one prominent political scientist mentioned Malaysia nearly 25 years ago as one of the most important examples for the virtues of consociational democracy¹⁵ outside Europe (Lijphart, 1977: 150-58). Nevertheless, electoral reforms could help to improve electoral quality in Malaysia and diminish democratic 'defects' without endangering the consociational democracy. Still, as long as voting is free and elections are competitive (as they are), even managed elections provide a powerful instrument of vertical accountability, Lim argues. Concerning the difficult balance of power between communal groups, it seems that managed elections are a condition of democratic stability in Malaysia and not an obstacle to it.

In her chapter on Singapore, *Yeo Lay Hwee* gives a historical account of the development of the electoral system in Singapore, and provides an evaluation of its performance, and how it contributes to the democratic development of Singapore. Yeo's paper discovers significant deficits of electoral fairness in Singapore. These deficits range from gerrymandering to the institutionalization of a multi-member constituency system, which heavily favours the ruling People's Action Party (PAP). This phenomenon is accompanied by constraints on oppositional activities based on the Internal Security Act, a suppressed media and the rationalization of the state treasurer's power to influence the choice of voters. However, Yeo argues conclusively that these power instruments alone do not explain one-party dominance in the city-state. The weakness of opposition parties and the prolonged electoral dominance by the ruling party is the result of several more reasons, of which good governance and the party's high ideological appeal are the two most important. Elections do have a political meaning in Singapore, are competitive and appear free and fair. They do provide therefore the legitimacy for the PAP's continued rule, while at the same time they do not offer to the opposition any opportunity to get into power. Electoral reforms might improve the quality of the electoral process, but there is no certainty that they would end the PAP's rule.

Aurel Croissant discusses in his chapter the development of electoral politics in South Korea. Starting with a description of the historical development of

15. 'Consensus-oriented democracy'. For an elaborated discussion on consociational democracy, Lijphart, 1977.

elections and electoral systems in this East Asian country, he focuses on the reform discussion of the 1990s. Embedded in the broader context of democratization and democratic consolidation he analyses what the perils and virtues of the electoral system are with regard to the general functions of electoral systems, which interests and strategies are guiding the discussion about electoral reforms and to what extent the most recent reforms meet the reform demand. His discussion shows that the functional weaknesses of the electoral system in South Korea are related neither to the technical aspects of conducting free and fair elections, nor to its capacity to produce political majorities. Rather it is the party-building function of the electoral system which represents the strongest deficit of the current system. He also shows, however, that this problem is not discussed very much in South Korea. Moreover, the reform discourse in the 1990s does not seem helpful for improving this function. He therefore concludes his chapter with some alternative reform proposals.

The chapters on Thailand and the Philippines analyse two cases which are often taken as empirical evidence that democracy without adjectives like 'Asian', 'illiberal' or 'restricted' is possible in the region. While the Republic of the Philippines has one of the longest traditions of elections in Asia, only interrupted for a short period during the personalized rule of President Ferdinand Marcos, the role of elections in and the contribution of the electoral system to the process of political development are still problematic, as *Julio C. Teehankee* argues in his chapter. This holds true not only for the correctness and meaningfulness of the electoral process, but also for the two functional demands of representation and integration of the political will of the people. Still, vote-rigging, vote-buying, cheating and political violence are common elements in elections, and the electoral system is characterized by high disproportionality and an insufficient integrational effect on the party landscape. The institutionalization of the party system remains weak, while traditional politicians have virtually institutionalized the practice of political turncoatism. The deficient social representativeness of congress, a lack of responsiveness to the voters' demands on the side of the political parties and the elitist nature of congressional politics are closely related to the decades-old dynamics of electoral and party politics, going back to the period of colonial rule in the early twentieth century. These problems have not been tempered so far. Moreover, the Philippine Constitution of 1987 makes parliamentary representation easier for various social groups by establishing a party-list system, employed for the first time in 1998.

The chapter by *Orathai Kokpol* on Thailand starts with the observation that even though Thailand's experience with holding elections goes back to the year 1933, elections have not always played a significant role in Thai politics. Only for a short period during the 1970s were elections a meaningful method of political participation for Thai citizens. However, Thailand's electoral reforms, which were adopted in 1997 and 1998, had far-reaching implications for the nation's political system. They were an essential part of a process of political

reform, which started in 1992 with the overthrow of the last military-led cabinet of General Suchinda and climaxed with the adoption of the kingdom's sixteenth constitution since 1933. While the new constitution introduced direct elections to the senate and established new provisions for elections to the house of representatives, another significant element of institutional reform was the founding of an independent election commission in 1998. The first election to the senate took place between March and June 2000 followed by house elections in January 2001. Here the author takes up two important questions: were the elections the beginning of new politics in Thailand with regard to the composition and role of parliament; and did the new system have the desired effect in terms of a cleaner, fairer and more transparent electoral process? Orathai's conclusions are ambivalent. Despite the satisfaction of the new system's overall performance, there are still problems concerning the integrity, transparency and efficiency of the electoral processes. On the other side, the elections led to a generational change in parliament. In the senate the dominance of the old forces of bureaucratic polity was reduced with the rise of new social forces; a shift of political generation is also evident in the house of representatives, as shown, among other things, in the extraordinarily high rate of newcomers.

In the final chapter, *Aurel Croissant* summarizes synoptically the data and results presented in the book and puts them into the broader perspective of regional comparison. The aim is to lead the studies toward some general conclusions about the role the electoral system plays in Southeast and East Asia: does it offer institutional incentives for political transformation and democratic development, or is it an institutional element of political stagnation?

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