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DEMOCRACY IN DIVIDED SOCIETIES:
Electrical Engineering for Conflict Management

BENJAMIN REILLY

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Author's Profile

Benjamin Reilly is a professor of political science and international relations at the University of Western Australia. Benjamin previously served as dean of the Sir Walter Murdoch School and was director of the Centre for democratic institutions at the Australian National University (ANU). Benjamin is also an expert in the Australian government, the United Nations, and other international organizations. As a professor of political science, Benjamin was invited to various scientific forums to speak at well-known campuses, such as Harvard, Oxford, and Johns Hopkins. Publicizing scientific papers and books earned Benjamin numerous international grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the United States Institute of Peace, the East-West Center, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the Australian Research Council. Benjamin's ideas and thoughts were widely published in various international and national newspapers, including the New York Times, Financial Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, and Time Magazine.

Book

The book entitled *Democracy in Divided Societies Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management* is one of his works that has attracted the attention of many political figures and has become a reference in the process of holding elections in several countries. One of the important parts discussed in his book is in chapter 3 entitled "Centripetal Incentives and Political Engineering in Australia". Benjamin Reilly explains how electoral systems can be a solution to conflict management in divided societies. Divisions that occur in some countries due to multicultural societies with various ethnicities affect political interests and policies. As stated by Josep Schumpeter, the method of democracy is an institutional arrangement to reach political decisions whereby individuals gain the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle to get the votes of the people. Australia is one of the multiethnic countries, and according to research data, about 40 percent of Australians are born abroad and are descendants of immigrants born abroad who are mostly from non-English-speaking countries in Southern Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. The State of Australia combines the federal system of government by spreading power geographically with a preferential voting system for states and federals in three government areas (federal, state, and local). Many countries consider Australia successful in integrating millions of migrants into democratic societies, although equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remains unmet.

The electoral system in Australia is very interesting and unique by introducing an electoral system using three electoral models.

1. Alternative Vote (AV): An alternative voting system is used in single-member districts, where voters rank candidates in the order of their choice by assigning the number 1 considered most preferred up to the number of the last candidate considered by voters to be less favored.
2. Supplementary Vote (SV): The supplementary vote system is used in an instance run-off system that takes place in a single round. This system is used as a middle ground between the AV system and the two-round system. Voters mark their preferences on the ballot paper, just like in the alternative vote system model.
3. Single Transferable Vote (STV): The single transferable vote (STV) system is used in multi-member districts and in Senate elections. The counting of votes is done by choosing a system of votes to elect a single candidate.

Australia is considered capable of minimizing conflicts in its country through the electoral system. Ethnically divided societies tend to seek a wide range of electoral support from various groups outside their communities . Political institutions made as best as possible, specifically through electoral systems, can exert influence across political competitions, exerting a centrist pull on electoral politics and a moderating influence that encourages cooperation on behavior in general. The existence of centripetal politics in Australia offers the best special by providing an overview of ways of exchanging preferences that promote real policy change on the part of parties and governments. The use of preferential voting in Australia is a way that has provided the ever-cautious national voters with the means to punish any ideology deemed extreme. Centripetalism is a political system in which the focus of political competition is directed toward the center rather than toward the extremes. Centripetal institutions are designed to encourage various forms of moderate and centrist political competition. It is not the extreme forms and centrifugal patterns that polarize so many fragmented societies. In the case of centripetalism as a form of conflict management, there is a need to create incentives to accommodate various competing interests in a society beset by deep ethnic divisions or other divisions.

The system that was built in the end formed an institutional design that encouraged three phenomena in a divided society, namely: 1) Electoral incentives: Politicians who campaign to reach and attract votes from a variety of ethnic groups other than their own, thus encouraging them to moderate their political rhetoric on potentially divisive issues and forcing them to expand their policy positions in hopes of attracting broader multi-ethnic electoral support, 2) Bargaining arena: Political actors from different groups have an incentive to come together to bargain and negotiate in search of cross-party and cross-

ethnic agreements in voting, negotiations that can then lead to discussion of other, more substantial issues as well; 3) Centrist and aggressive political parties or coalitions of political parties: Political parties that seek multi-ethnic support and present diverse policy options to voters and which, through cross-ethnic voter appeal, vote transfer, and inter-ethnic coalitions, are able to create and maintain cross-ethnic bargaining based on programmed policy platforms.

Conclusion

Electoral engineering for conflict management in the development of the political system is deliberately done through institutional electoral system design so that all interest groups can be accommodated in the political system. Minority groups in particular could have the opportunity to gain support and have representatives both in parliament and in government by entering into coalitions with major parties. With the existence of a majority system, the plurality of candidates who have the most votes is not necessarily the absolute majority in the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system. Meanwhile, in the block voting system, the implementation of FPTP is in constituencies that have diverse representation, not just a single candidate. Voters have as many seats as they need to fill, and the candidates with the most votes fill positions that lack the percentage of votes they get. Thus, the electoral system policy in Australia assumes that alternative vote preferences should provide the strongest centrist incentive of all preference systems because of the majority threshold for victory and the order of removal of excluded candidates. The political engineering used by the Australian state can minimize conflicts between diverse groups of people. The interests of minority groups can be accommodated by cooperating and bargaining with large political parties, and in the end, minority groups can have representation in parliament and in government.

Reference

Reilly, B. (2001). *Democracy in divided societies: Electoral engineering for conflict management*. Cambridge University Press.