

A Convergent Electoral System in Proportional Representation: A Midpoint between Closed and Open Lists

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Abstract

The article presents a theory that seeks to explain a convergent way among two contesting electoral systems of proportional representation, i.e., Closed List Proportional Representation (CLPR) and Open List Proportional Representation (OLPR). The former denotes the hyper-centralized party extreme while the latter indicates the hyper-personalistic extreme. This article sought to criticize those two disputable systems and, in turn, propose a midpoint between the two extreme systems. Literature on CLPR and OLPR systems examined from multiple perspectives is exposed. This theory is initially advanced in a discursive section, which puts forward that both systems, CLPR and OLPR, are situated on their own 'extreme' types. A global trend in electoral system design away from 'extreme' types is also detected. Consequently, a midpoint should be projected as a new theory of the convergent electoral system, where this article offers a new theory, so-called "Moderate List Proportional Representation" (MLPR). This article afterward presents a more formal exposition of this theory, containing the concept and characteristics, assumptions, and a set of testable propositions. It concludes with illustrative instances of this theoretical construction.

A. Introduction

From a theoretical standpoint, electoral system has three major systems: plurality/majority, mixed system, and proportional representation (PR). The majority system reveals a simple popular vote as the winner. The mixed system combines the plurality/majority and PR systems into one system and one ballot paper. Meanwhile, the PR is a system that converts a party's share of the vote into a corresponding proportion of parliamentary seats (Reynolds & Reilly, 2002). The PR prefers to require the usage of the multi-member district rather than the single-member district and the application of the parliamentary threshold. It usually employs a specific formula for vote counting. According to data displayed in Fig. 1, the PR system is more popular than others, with approximately 81 democratic states adopting it as the electoral system with their own specific features. The authors compiled such data by reviewing all countries around the world. It could be that our data is different from others because of various distinctive measures we have.

More specifically, the PR system has two sub-systems, i.e., the List PR and Single Transferable Vote (STV). In the List PR system, every party proposes a list of candidate names to the voter for the multi-member district. Voters vote for a party or a candidate. Parties gain seats in proportion to their overall share of the national vote. The List PR system has three sub-variants: Closed List PR (CLPR), Open List PR (OLPR), and Free List PR (FLPR). If a voter only votes for a party in the CLPR, a voter has two choices in the OLPR: a candidate or a party. In the FLPR, a voter has as many votes as seats to be filled and can distribute them to candidates, either in a single party list or across various party lists. If the party determines the elected candidate in the CLPR, the elected candidate is affected by the candidate's highest vote in the remaining systems (Reynolds & Reilly, 2002). Among those three sub-variants, CLPR and OLPR are the most popular electoral systems adopted by democratic states worldwide. 78 of 187

democratic countries applied the List PR system, where CLPR and OLPR consist of 39 countries, respectively (Al-Hamdi, Lailam, & Wijaya, 2025).

Source: Compiled by the Authors.

It is essential to note here that both electoral systems, CLPR and OLPR, have their own strengths and weaknesses. Under the CLPR system, discrimination is suffered by women candidates (Verge & Wiesehomeier, 2019) and are merely fewer “locals” among the higher positions on the candidates’ lists and among heads of lists who are elected (Espírito-Santo & Sanches, 2018). Although CLPR affects elected legislators to obey the party line, the legislators’ defections elected from overrepresented districts to please voters should be expected (Alemán, Micozzi, Pinto, & Saiegh, 2021). In addition, voters have no significant chance to determine the preferred candidate and no direct commitment occurs between the candidate and society (Al-Hamdi, Sakir, Lailam, 2021). Nonetheless, this system is projected to diminish the money politics rampant in society (Subekti, 2019; Muhtadli, 2023) despite not being applicable in Turkey (Çarkoğlu & Aytaç, 2015).

In the meantime, the OLPR system induces different campaign strategies operated by each legislator candidate and weakens the party policy (Ames, 1995). It directs toward a more professionalized and capital-intensive campaign. Constituency services, personalized campaigns, local issues, and negative campaigns play a significant role under OLPR (Ma & Choy, 2003). In the same vein, this system resulted in a professionalized and commercial campaign (Ufen, 2010) as well as the candidates’ campaign focus and expenditures, which were closely linked to intraparty competition (Selb & Lutz, 2015; Bergman, Shugart, & Watt, 2013; Cheibub & Sin, 2020). Thus, the candidates’ incentives have a significant impact on personal votes rather than party reputation (Carey & Shugart, 1995) and personal attributes have a powerful effect on candidates’ ability to attract personal votes (von Schoultz & Papageorgiou, 2019). Minorities are proportionally represented in parliament merely if voters can cast a limited number of preferential votes (Negri, 2018).

Although voters can vote for a candidate directly, incumbency is still advantageous (Dettman, Pepinsky, & Pierskalla, 2017). Hence, the candidate listed early on the ballot wins the most preference votes (Söderlund, Schoultz, & Papageorgiou, 2021). In terms of gender quota, although OLPR causes an increasing number of female candidates, their electoral performance is declining (Górecki & Kukolowicz, 2014). Similarly, the number of women candidates is increasing at promising ballot positions, but it has a minor effect on the number of preferential votes cast for women (Jankowski & Marcinkiewicz, 2019). Therefore, the OLPR system has an ineffective impact on the women’s quota (Jones & Navia, 1999). It cannot be denied that OLPR has a powerful effect on the prevalence of money politics, mainly in society (Bratton, 2008; Carreras & İrepoğlu, 2013; Aspinall, Rohman, Hamdi, Rubaidi, & Triantini, 2017; Nichter, 2021).

Both systems indeed demonstrate highly problematic characteristics. The CLPR system denotes the hyper-centralized party while the OLPR system indicates the hyper-personalistic extreme (Hellmann, 2014). A midpoint is needed to achieve the electoral efficiency. Therefore, a central question is proposed:

Which convergent way could address both extreme PR systems to consolidate a democratic state? This article aims to dissect those two contrasting systems and present a new electoral system theory, mainly the electoral system family of PR. Such a new theory is named “Moderate List Proportional Representation” (MLPR). The innovative potential of the article is a new theory of the MLPR system as a new electoral system, particularly under the PR system family. Such a system is designed as a convergent way between CLPR and OLPR systems. It is part of the originality of the research because none of the prior studies have examined this issue.

B. Extant Studies of Proportional Representation: A Contesting System of CLPR and OLPR

Before proposing our own theory of a convergent electoral system, this article will review a number of extant papers on the proportional representation (PR) system. There are at least three different issues that analyze a PR system: *first*, party strategies and representation in List PR systems, *second*, system design and representation, and *third*, candidates, campaigns, and political funding. Concerning the issue of party strategies and representation, Buisseret et al. (2022) examined the party strategies at nominating candidates in the List PR system. The finding challenges conventional accounts of candidate selection in which parties prioritize candidate quality in their nomination strategies only when constrained by electoral incentives. Furthermore, Buisseret & Prato (2022) investigated the dynamics of legislative representation and the relationship between voters, parties, and legislators. They found that more flexibility can worsen local representation. List flexibility also acts as a key mediator of the effect of voter partisanship on party cohesion. They argued that higher district magnitude encourages representatives to toe the party line under all ballot systems.

Relating to the system design and representation issues, Lijphart & Gibberd (1977) scrutinized the threshold and electoral outcomes in the list PR system. They argued that the effective threshold is more decisive than the legal threshold as the seat allocation formula and district magnitude influence it. Large districts lower the effective threshold, benefiting smaller parties, while small districts favour larger parties. The List PR creates a trade-off between PR (more parties entering) and political stability (fewer dominant large parties). Afterward, van Deemen (1993) dissected the paradoxes in voting behaviour within the List PR. Three voting paradoxes for the List PR are presented: a party may be preferred by a majority to another party and yet receive fewer seats, a party which is majority-preferred to every other party may not get the most significant number of seats, and a party which is beaten by every other party in a pairwise majority comparison may become the largest party while a party which is majority preferred to every other party may become the smallest one. Meanwhile, Kimura (2013) elaborated on the reform of the party list system in the Philippines. This system failed to achieve its original goal of strengthening sectoral representation because it tended to be co-opted by the political elite, requiring reform to make it fairer, more proportional. Moreover, van der Hout et al. (2006) theorized that the List PR has formal characteristics that can be explained by social choice theory. Although it is relatively more proportional,

the technical design (seat formula) always involves a trade-off between proportionality, stability, and fairness of representation, so, no system is entirely perfect.

In terms of the issue of candidates, campaigns, and political funding, Put et al. (2023) highlighted the funding gap between incumbents and challengers while Put et al. (2021) emphasized the influence of experience on a candidate's position on the ballot. Both studies demonstrated that in the List PR, the internal party competition and non-proportional factors (funding and experience) greatly determine the election results.

Among other electoral systems under the PR system family, CLPR and OLPR are the most prevalent. This section continues to present extant theories on those two challenging systems. In terms of studies on the CLPR system, Buben & Kouba (2017), Catalinac & Motolinia (2021), and Moraski (2015) discussed the CLPR from a district magnitude point of view. Buben & Kouba (2017) reviewed the electoral system performance, particularly in post-communist democracies and Latin America. They concluded that further steps towards personalization (by opening up lists or reducing district size) are not advisable. Afterwards, Catalinac & Motolinia (2021) examined whether incumbents target core supporters or swing voters in CLPR systems. They argued that marginal districts are allocated more in the CLPR system with a divisor-based formula as the efficiency of additional votes is highest. This pattern makes it clear that in some PR systems, the target of geographical expenditure is not directed to the party's loyal supporters, but rather to districts that seem easy to increase their seats through a few additional votes. In the meantime, Moraski (2015) dissected how ruling parties in increasingly authoritarian regimes take advantage of legislative electoral system changes. He argued that the placement of former district councillors on the lists of Russia's ruling party following the switch to a purely proportional system reflects an interest in expanding its presence in the countryside as well as the attractiveness of the ruling party to former district councillors themselves.

Alemán et al. (2021) and Fiva et al. (2021) examined the CLPR system from the constituents' perspectives. Alemán et al. (2021) observed empirically using voting record data of Argentine legislators and a unique dataset that estimates the position of voters and legislators in the same ideological space. They suggested that even under electoral rules that promote unified parties, we can expect strategic deficiencies to please voters, which can be favourable for the party's electoral fortunes. Meanwhile, Fiva et al. (2021) scrutinized whether the presence of local candidates on party lists still influences voter behaviour at the local level, even though the system is party-centric. The finding confirmed that local representation remains essential in the CLPR system: the presence of local candidates increases voter support at the local level, even if voters only vote for parties. Parties use geographical strategies to balance candidate lists, and candidates' proximity to voters generates mobilization effects (friends and neighbours). Nonetheless, local representation does not translate into different fiscal policies - public allocations remain unfairly distributed.

In European countries, Espírito-Santo & Sanches (2018) and Verge & Wiesehomeier (2019) dissected the CLPR system from the perspective of political parties. Espírito-Santo & Sanches (2018) analysed where

parties place local candidates in a CLPR system. They investigated how these choices vary depending on two key district factors, namely district size and whether the district is in a peripheral region. To this end, they used the original biographical dataset of candidates for the Portuguese National Parliament (1983, 1995, 2002, 2005, and 2009). There are fewer local candidates at the top and the head of the list. The effects of district size and peripheral areas are as expected, but these effects are relatively small. Meanwhile, Verge & Wiesehomeier (2019) investigated Spain's CLPR system, where parties have complete control over the order of candidate lists. They hypothesized that although Spain has adopted official gender quotas and increased the number of female candidates, internal party practices - especially in ranking candidate lists - still tend to prioritize men. Gender discrimination is strategic and systemic, rather than the result of a dearth of political experience of female candidates. The upshot, progress in female representation has been gradual, but male dominance has not been fully overcome.

Furthermore, Moraski (2017) analysed Ukraine's electoral system transition from a mixed system, a combination of districts (first-past-the-post) and party lists, to a full CLPR system from the 2006 parliamentary election. The primary focus is how the change affected party strategies, particularly the two major parties, Our Ukraine (the government) and the Party of Regions, in developing candidate lists. The electoral success is that the Party of Regions, with its cohesion strategy, was more successful in winning seats and gaining power post-transition, demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach in the context of the new CLPR system. In Italy, Galasso & Nannicini (2015) dissected how parties employ the power of candidate selection in the CLPR system to gain voter support. Parties strategically position loyalists and experts on candidate lists to maximize persuasion of two types of voters: rational vs behavioural. Evidence from Italy in 2013 supported that voters are more rational-they pay attention to the balance of the entire list, not just the individuals at the top.

Regarding literature on the OLPR system, some scholars are concerned to observe such a system from a gender perspective (Jones & Navia, 1999; Gamboa & Morales, 2021; Górecki & Kukołowicz, 2014; Jankowski & Marcinkiewicz, 2019; Ragauskas, 2021; Schmidt, 2020; Corrêa & Chaves, 2020; Morales & Pérez, 2025). Meanwhile, others examined the OLPR system from multiple perspectives, namely digital political campaigns (Eynde & Maddens, 2023), incumbent candidates (Dettman et al., 2017), the ballot paper (Söderlund et al., 2021), political corruption (Chang, 2005), preventing minority representation voters (Negri, 2018), and a game-theoretic model (Kselman, 2020).

Jones & Navia (1999) discussed gender quotas in Chile. Implementing quotas in the OLPR system will not have the same positive effect on the percentage of women elected as in many CLPR systems. In addition, larger quotas (e.g., 40% rather than 25%) are unlikely to be much more effective, suggesting that quota advocates opt for smaller quotas, which will face less legislative resistance. Subsequently, Gamboa & Morales (2021) analysed the impact of candidate gender quotas in the OLPR system and their interaction with election campaign spending in Chile in 2017. They postulated that quota laws effectively increase women's representation, but the difference in electoral performance between men and women remains risen dramatically. This result is mainly due to gender inequality in access to

resources to finance election campaigns. These inequalities apply only to candidates challenging incumbents, but not to incumbents themselves: incumbent women are just as competitive as men.

Górecki & Kukołowicz (2014) examined the impact of mandatory gender quotas (set by law) in Poland. The finding revealed that quotas are inherently paradoxical: they lead to a significant increase in the number of female candidates, but the increase is accompanied by a sharp decline in women's electoral performance. This pattern holds even considering various candidate background indicators, including previous political experience. Subsequently, by taking the case of the same country, Poland, Jankowski & Marcinkiewicz (2019) found that gender quotas increased the number of women placed in promising list positions and had minimal impact on the number of preferential votes cast for women. In addition, simulations showed that the quotas positively affected the number of women elected. Moreover, Ragauskas (2021) investigated voter bias in the OLPR system in the Lithuanian legislative elections (2008, 2012, 2016), where parties determine the order of candidates. However, voters can fully influence that order through preferential voting. Her findings demonstrated that the Social Democratic Party voters are, on average, least sympathetic towards female candidates, accounting for a positive elite bias towards female candidates from the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, while United Fatherland Party (conservative) voters overwhelmingly favour female politicians.

In Latin America, Schmidt (2020) reviewed the longstanding debate in the literature on electoral systems regarding the relative merits of open and closed lists in the election of women, describes the very different systems used in congressional and municipal elections in Peru, and analyzes gender inequalities between Lima and the provinces. The finding suggested that list type does not significantly influence the capital but that women candidates perform better under closed lists in the provinces, where the socioeconomic context and political culture are less favourable to women. Additionally, Corrêa & Chaves (2020) addressed the effectiveness of gender quotas in proportional electoral systems, regardless of list type. Analysing 140 legislative elections in Latin America conducted between 1990 and 2018. They argued that mandate placement has similar effects across both list types as a function of different mechanisms. Furthermore, Morales & Pérez (2025) proposed the parity correction mechanisms (PCMs) in Chile to remove elected candidate of the over-represented gender and include unelected candidates of the under-represented gender. The finding indicated that PCMs do not always revise representation in favour of women, PCMs affect the left-and right-wing lists in almost identical proportions, and a party could lose its seat because of PCM.

In addition, Eynde & Maddens (2023) scrutinized the OLPR system from the perspective of digital political campaigns. The finding explained that investment in self-owned Web 1.0 media and paid Web 2.0 media has no impact on electoral performance. In contrast, investment in traditional tools has a significant positive effect. Although most candidates use digital tools, they only invest a small portion of their budget in these tools, which may explain the absence of the effects of digital spending. From the perspective of incumbent candidates, Dettman et al. (2017) discussed the OLPR system by using data from Indonesia's April 2014 legislative elections to study the relationship between incumbent status, position on the candidate list, candidate characteristics, and electoral success in the OLPR system.

Contrary to recent literature that identifies incumbency disadvantages in other large developing democracies, this paper found a consistent personal incumbency advantage in Indonesia. However, it argued that this advantage is mediated by the party's choice in ranking incumbencies and newcomers on the party list, which is a key heuristic for voters in a limited information electoral environment such as Indonesia.

In Finland, Söderlund et al. (2021) investigated the OLPR system from the ballot paper perspective. Analysing six parliamentary elections in Finland, they first demonstrated that the relationship between ballot position and preference votes follows an inverted J-shaped curve. Candidates listed at the beginning of the ballot get the most preference votes, while candidates listed at the end have an advantage over those in the middle. In addition, the ballot position effect gets stronger with the complexity of the electoral environment. The ballot position effect increases as the number of candidates on the party list increases, the candidate-to-seat ratio increases, and the number of incumbent candidates on the list decreases. Furthermore, Chang (2005) observed the OLPR system from the perspective of political corruption. He hypothesized that in the OLPR system, where personal votes are costly but crucial for politicians to win elections, politicians' electoral uncertainty about their chances of winning induces them to engage in corruption to finance campaigns. This hypothesis, which goes against the conventional view suggesting an anti-corruption effect of electoral uncertainty, gains significant empirical support from individual-level data from pre-1994 Italy.

Moreover, Negri (2018) analysed the OLPR system from the point of view of preventing minority representation. She investigated how the number of candidates voters can choose from affects minority representation in parliament. A clear negative relationship between the two was detected. Minorities will only be proportionally represented in parliament if voters can cast limited preferential votes. As the number of preferential votes increases, a multiplier effect emerges, which disproportionately increases the power of the majority in determining the elected candidate. It is significant to note that Kselman (2020) developed a game-theoretic model to study the provision of public goods in CLPR and OLPR systems. The main result showed that legislators will provide more public goods to voters in the OLPR system than in the CLPR system. Nevertheless, two intermediate variables affect the institutional comparison: district size and election volatility. First, public goods provision effort increases with increasing district size in OLPR systems, while in CLPR systems, it tends to increase with decreasing district size. Indeed, when the district size is 2, the two systems are often indistinguishable. Moreover, the difference between OLPR and CLPR weakens when election volatility is low, so neither system generates high public goods effort. In addition to their relevance for political economy, these results provide a game-theoretic foundation for a series of theoretical conjectures found in Carey & Shugart's (1995) classic study of electoral institutions and legislative personalism.

This paper adheres to Gibbs' (1972) recommendation for presenting an informal 'discursive' exposition of a theory, which builds a case for the theory, followed by a 'formal' assertion that facilitates empirical examination.

C. A Discursive Exposition of the Theory

Generally speaking, our theory commences by responding to Hellmann (2014). As does Hellmann, this paper concurs with the premise that both systems, CLPR and OLPR, are placed on their own extreme points. The CLPR system denotes the hyper-centralized party intervention while the OLPR system indicates the hyper-personalistic extreme power. The former tends to apply the most candidate-centred electoral system while the latter adopts the most party-centred one. Each of them has its own weaknesses and strengths. They will blame each other. Like Hellmann, we feel that a midpoint is a need to follow a global trend in electoral system design away from 'extreme' types.

Nonetheless, we convincingly disagree with the premise that the CLPR system reinforces the party institutionalization while the OLPR system tends to weaken it. The existing experience in Scandinavian countries, which have been applying the OLPR system, could be a tangible proof that the OLPR did not undermine the party institutionalization. Instead, political parties in those parliamentary democratic countries are well institutionalized. It was also acknowledged by the annual reports released by the Freedom House and the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), which always position all Scandinavian countries in the top list as the consolidated democratic states of the world. The question is, why could it not have occurred in other democratic countries that also adopted the OLPR system? That is the problem.

It is also fundamental to note here that this paper accepts the premise that the OLPR system contributes as one of the indicators, not the dominant factor, in affecting the rampant deeds of money politics or vote buying. Nonetheless, this paper powerfully rejects the premise of the OLPR system as the determining factor in the emergence of money politics behaviours. Once more, the OLPR system is merely one of the key indicators where four other indicators also strengthen money politics deeds: *first*, the executive direct elections, such as the presidential election, the regional head election, and the village head election; *second*, the weak regulation including the poor law enforcement inside; *third*, the immoral and corrupt recruitment of the Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs); *fourth*, societal norms and customs where the public accepts money politics as part of *rizq* (sustenance) (Al-Hamdi, Lailam, Sakir, & Subekti, 2025). Thus, we support Ma, Whiting, Zhang, & Zhao's (2022) hypothesis that vote buying could occur when competition is candidate-centred rather than party-centred. Nevertheless, this paper differs from the premise that the CLPR system aims to eradicate money politics deeds. Based on Hellmann's (2014) findings, electoral reform in Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, and Indonesia has bleak prospects of diminishing money politics and corruption. This implies that no electoral system can prevent money politics without executing those four indicators.

Therefore, our theory here is based on four fundamental premises as follows:

1. CLPR and OLPR are positioned in their own extreme ways. The former relies on the party intervention while the latter hangs on the candidate's power. They will blame each other without a final discussion. The convergent electoral system is a must to avoid the extreme types.
2. CLPR and OLPR are not determining factors that can weaken or strengthen the party institutionalization. Other factors contribute, such as the theory developed by Randall & Svåsand (2002) on four indicators of party institutionalization, i.e., systemness, value infusion, decisional autonomy, and reification.
3. OLPR is situated as one of the five indicators influencing deeds in money politics. The four other indicators are executive direct elections, weak regulations, the immoral recruitment of the EMBs, and public perception mistakes on money politics. If it is calculated quantitatively, the OLPR system just contributed 20 percent to the emergence of money politics. There are remaining 80 percent due to other indicators. Do not blame the OLPR as the only driving factor of money politics.
4. Eradicating money politics in the electoral competition requires a comprehensive approach involving many aspects and stakeholders. All kinds of electoral systems are not enough to obliterate it. However, at least addressing the five indicators mentioned above could gradually minimize such money politics.

Our theory is constructed to explain a fundamental convergent electoral system that accommodates both contesting electoral systems, CLPR and OLPR. Our new theory is still designed under the Proportional Representation (PR) system family. This proposal differs from the so-called mixed system, which refers to what happens in Germany's electoral system with its Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) or in Japan's parallel system.

D. Toward a Formal Theory of Moderate List Proportional Representation (MLPR)

The prior discursive discussion depicted the principal aspects of our theory, situating our thinking in the literature framework and reviewing some challenging viewpoints. Due to a discursive exposition not having the rigor necessary for a thorough one, this section attempted to provide some of that rigor by detailing the concepts and characteristics of the MLPR system, assumptions, and propositions that encompass the theory.

1. Concepts and Characteristics

Concept. Literally speaking, the term “moderate” in this concept differentiates it from other terms, such as “closed” in CLPR and “open” in OLPR. The moderate denotes a convergence or a midpoint. It is what we call a real proportionality in the PR system because of various disproportionalities in those two contesting systems (CLPR and OLPR). It is a convergent electoral system to avoid the trap of a two-dichotomized system, where the CLPR system relies on the party intervention (party-centred politics) while the OLPR system depends robustly on the candidate power (candidate-centred politics). The MLPR is an effort to discover the right midpoint to accommodate two contesting electoral systems without

removing one or both. Thus, the midpoint here could be understood as an endeavour to still accommodate the party intervention (CLPR) and the candidate power (OLPR) to compete with each other in influencing voters. Therefore, MLPR is indeed shall be differentiated from the Mixed System of election (see Fig. 3). If the Mixed System consists of two systems (majority and PR systems) in a ballot paper, MLPR only contains one system as applied in other PR systems.

Principally, the MLPR system adopts basic values of the OLPR system. There is specific guidance for voters. First, every single voter is provided his/her right to vote for one listed legislative candidate name on the ballot paper. Second, voters can still vote for a certain party based on their preferences. Third, voters are also allowed to vote for one listed legislative candidate name and the candidate's party on a ballot paper where the candidate name is still in the same party. Fourth, if a voter votes for the listed candidate for more than one name, their vote automatically belongs to the party. Fifth, a voter is not allowed to vote for the listed candidate whose the party is different from the candidate. For example, a voter votes for the candidate (nominated by Party A) while he/she also votes for Party B. If it occurs, the ballot paper is classified as an invalid vote.

Figure 2. MLPR's Valid Ballot Paper

Source: Designed by the Authors (2025).

The MLPR system is a space for political parties to map the party power in each electoral district, whether the party is categorized as the party ID or the personal ID. The electoral result could fundamentally evaluate the party's future strategy. Furthermore, the parliamentary threshold applies under the MLPR system by adopting a multi-member district (MMD) as the district magnitude. The parliamentary threshold must consider that the percentage is not too high or too low. It is important to note here that, as displayed in Fig. 2, there are five kinds of valid ballot papers in the MLPR system as follows:

- Ballot paper 1: If a voter marks only for the party symbol, the vote belongs to the party.
- Ballot paper 2: If the voter marks only for the candidate, the vote belongs to the candidate.
- Ballot paper 3: If the voter marks the party symbol and the candidate, the half vote ($\frac{1}{2}$) belongs to the party and the other half vote ($\frac{1}{2}$) belongs to the candidate.
- Ballot paper 4: If a voter marks for the party symbol and more than one candidate, the vote entirely belongs to the party.
- Ballot paper 5: If a voter marks for more than one candidate, the vote fully belongs to the party.

The Formula for Vote Counting. The MLPR system has its own formula to count all collected votes after all voters have donated their votes. Authorized officers indeed execute all counting processes. We highlight our most basic guidelines as follows:

- If the candidate's vote could surpass the party's vote, the candidate has his/her right to gain the parliamentary seat as long as the party's vote can fulfil the parliamentary threshold. In this context,

the OLPR system has the power to intervene.

- If the candidate's vote is less than the party's, the candidate with the smallest ordinal number has a significant chance of being elected as a parliament member. The CLPR's intervention is working at this point.
- If a party receives two parliamentary seats in a particular electoral district while only one candidate could surpass the party's vote, such a candidate automatically gains the seat. In the meantime, if other candidates' votes are less than the party's vote, the seat belongs to the candidate with the smallest ordinal number. The convergent method indeed works in this process.
- If the candidate with the ordinal number 1 has earned the seat due to surpassing the party's vote while the remaining seat is still available and other candidates' votes are less than the party's vote, the candidate with the ordinal number 2 has a potential chance to be elected. In this context, the CLPR intervention also works effectively.
- The voter's vote is still valid if he/she votes for a listed candidate name and a party symbol as displayed in Fig. 2. For vote counting: half ($\frac{1}{2}$) vote for the party and another half ($\frac{1}{2}$) for the candidate. It does not violate the principle of one person one vote one value (OPOVOV) because the vote is still fully one despite distributing half to the party and half to the candidate. Therefore, it is likely that the total number of votes each party has a comma, such as 151,5 votes. This formula is inspired by another electoral system, the Borda Count (BC), with a dissimilar pattern.

Source: Designed by the Authors (2025).

2. Assumptions

Similar to other theories that generate sets of testable propositions, the theory of MLPR is based on several assumptions. In the logic of investigation, assumptions are unverified empirical assertions. They are unverified mainly because they are too general or ambiguous to be tested, such as the assumption that the CLPR system could eradicate money politics in the election. This article makes analogous assertions on a convergent electoral system of proportional representation that it assumes to be true. This article formalizes the most fundamental assumptions as follows:

1. *The MLPR system is a midpoint of a proportional representation system.* It accommodates both systems, CLPR and OLPR, that are assumed to be extreme types. Although CLPR and OLPR are classified as PR systems, they are actually not considered proportional systems. It is primarily because those two systems have their own strengths and weaknesses that they should be combined in a new system. Neither of the two systems is withdrawn to be out. MLPR is a convergent electoral system.
2. *The unfinished debate on which system is better, CLPR or OLPR, is over.* Both systems have already been adopted in a new system. MLPR is a new home for CLPR and OLPR that could compete and complement each other. Therefore, debate no longer exists.
3. *Every single party could evaluate its existence in electoral districts.* Under MLPR, the party will have an actual map of the main base after the electoral contestation. It is mainly because this system

provides multiple choices (see Fig. 2) for voters to vote for the party or the candidate. If the party's vote is more than the candidate's, it denotes that the district is the party's main base. The party ID in such a district is verified. On the contrary, if the candidate's vote is more than the party's vote, it indicates that the personal branding is more dominant than the party image.

4. *Voters have multiple choices that could be classified as a valid vote.* If a voter prefers to vote for the party, he/she could mark the party symbol. If a voter wishes to vote for the candidate, he/she can directly mark the candidate's name. In the meantime, if a voter favours sharing his/her vote between the party and the candidate, he/she is still allowed to do so by donating a half vote for the party and another remaining vote for the candidate.
5. *The MLPR system is not the best way to eradicate the rampant behaviours of money politics.* The electoral system is not the only way to address money politics. This article proposes four key solutions to eliminate money politics, i.e., removing the executive direct elections, strengthening the regulation of party systems and electoral systems, restoring the EMBs recruitment by mainstreaming the integrity values, and changing public perceptions on money politics through numerous ways of campaigns and sustainable training.

3. Propositions

In contradiction of assumptions, which are easily expected to be true, the propositions in a theory are empirical assertions that are projected to be examined against data, at a minimum in principle. Nevertheless, propositions utilize abstract concepts that need to be made more real before they can be examined in practice. This is done by interpreting propositions into parallel postulates that use concrete concepts. Therefore, this article provides a set of four propositions on a convergent electoral system of MLPR.

1. *The more convergent the electoral system of proportional representation, the less likely the debate on which system is better than others.* This follows from assumptions A1 and A2. On the one hand, the CLPR devotees believe that they are a better system than others. On the other hand, the OLPR disciples are also sure that they have tangible evidence of their successful practice in numerous consolidated democracies. The convergent electoral system is a precise way to end this debate.
2. *The more pronounced the MLPR success, the more likely the map of the party ID based on the electoral district could be reached.* This follows from assumption A3. To test the proposition, the election should implement this MLPR system. Once such a system is executed, the map of the party's main base will automatically emerge in every district. It could be the main source for each party to evaluate itself for future elections.

3. *The more the voters' choices are recognized by the system, the more voters feel satisfied with their own choice.* This follows from assumption A4. We agree that voters prefer to fully vote only for the party or the candidate. However, some wish to distribute their vote: half to the candidate and half to the party, where this kind of vote should be recognized as a valid vote. Voters indeed feel honoured in the democratic environment if the system appreciates their choice.
4. *The greater the number of money politics cases detected, the greater the pressure for electoral system change.* This follows from assumption A5. It indicates that money politics will impair the electoral quality to be the poorer. The public resists changing the electoral system. Nonetheless, electoral reform is not enough to eradicate money politics powerfully. Various indicators can be used to address this issue.

E. Conclusion: Toward a Test of the Moderate List Proportional Representation (MLPR)

It should be recognized that no democratic state in the world adopts this electoral system of MLPR. It is indeed because this theory was just proposed in this article. However, there is a global trend in electoral reform to move away from 'extreme' systems. It can be seen that some Asian countries, such as Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia have changed their electoral systems. Some could be successful, but a few are still detected moving toward unconsolidated democracies. According to the latest annual reports of Freedom House (2025) and the EIU (2024), Taiwan and Japan were classified as full democratic states. In the case of South Korea, Freedom House (2025) catalogued it as a full democratic state while the EIU (2024) categorized it as a flawed democratic state. According to Hellmann (2014), these three countries applied the same electoral system, i.e., parallel system. More specifically, Taiwan modified its system from MMM (nominal tier = SNTV) to MMM (nominal tier = SMP) in 2008, Japan changed its system from SNTV to MMM in 1994, and South Korea altered its system from MMM with a single ballot to MMM with a double ballot in 2004.[1]

The Philippines and Indonesia were grouped by Freedom House (2025) as semi democratic states and by the EIU (2024) as flawed democratic states. The Philippines replaced its system from SMP to SMP with a capped party list in 1998 while Indonesia converted from the CLPR to the OLPR in 2009. The Philippines and Indonesia have the same fate, using Merkel & Croissant's (2004) criteria, that they are right now situated in the stability scenario, neither a trajectory towards a consolidated democracy in the near future nor a regression. There is potential for the Philippines and Indonesia to be trapped in the regression scenario of being caught in a 'cycle of political crisis'. In the meantime, Thailand was classified by Freedom House (2025) as an undemocratic state because of its transition phase and by the EIU (2024) as a flawed democratic state. The alteration of the electoral system in Thailand from block voting to MMM in 2001 has not led to moving forward to a consolidated democratic state. On the contrary, what is happening in Thailand indicates that this country is positioned in a regression scenario.

It is interesting to note that Turkey, which adopts the CLPR system, was catalogued as an undemocratic state by Freedom House (2025) and as a hybrid regime by the EIU (2024). The hybrid regime denotes the

lack of free and fair elections, regime pressure on opposition parties and candidates, crucial weaknesses (in political culture, functioning of government, and political participation), rampant corruption, the poor rule of law, the weak civil society, harassment of and pressure on journalists, and the lack of independence among the judiciary. It implies that a hybrid regime is another term for Turkey as an undemocratic state.

The electoral reform in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea should be appreciated because these three countries can consolidate the path of democratization. Nevertheless, multiple cases in other Asian countries, such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Turkey, which reveal unconsolidated democracies must be evaluated fundamentally. Consequently, they need to change their electoral systems to a more convergent one. The MLPR system could be another path toward a consolidated democracy because it is a midpoint to integrate the positive energies of CLPR and OLPR systems into a new theory of the PR system family, as shown in Fig. 3. Asian and Latin American countries could adopt this system while contextualizing it with local values.

Declarations

Data availability

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article [and/or] its supplementary materials. Data are obtained by literature review of previous studies. The qualitative data generated and analysed during the current study are not publicly available due to ethical and confidentiality considerations. We agree to share the data upon reasonable request.

Disclosure statement

No potential competing interest was reported by the authors.

Informed consent

This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

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Footnotes

1. SNTV: Single Non-Transferable Vote.
SMP: Single-Member Plurality.
MMM: Mixed-Member Majoritarian.

Figures

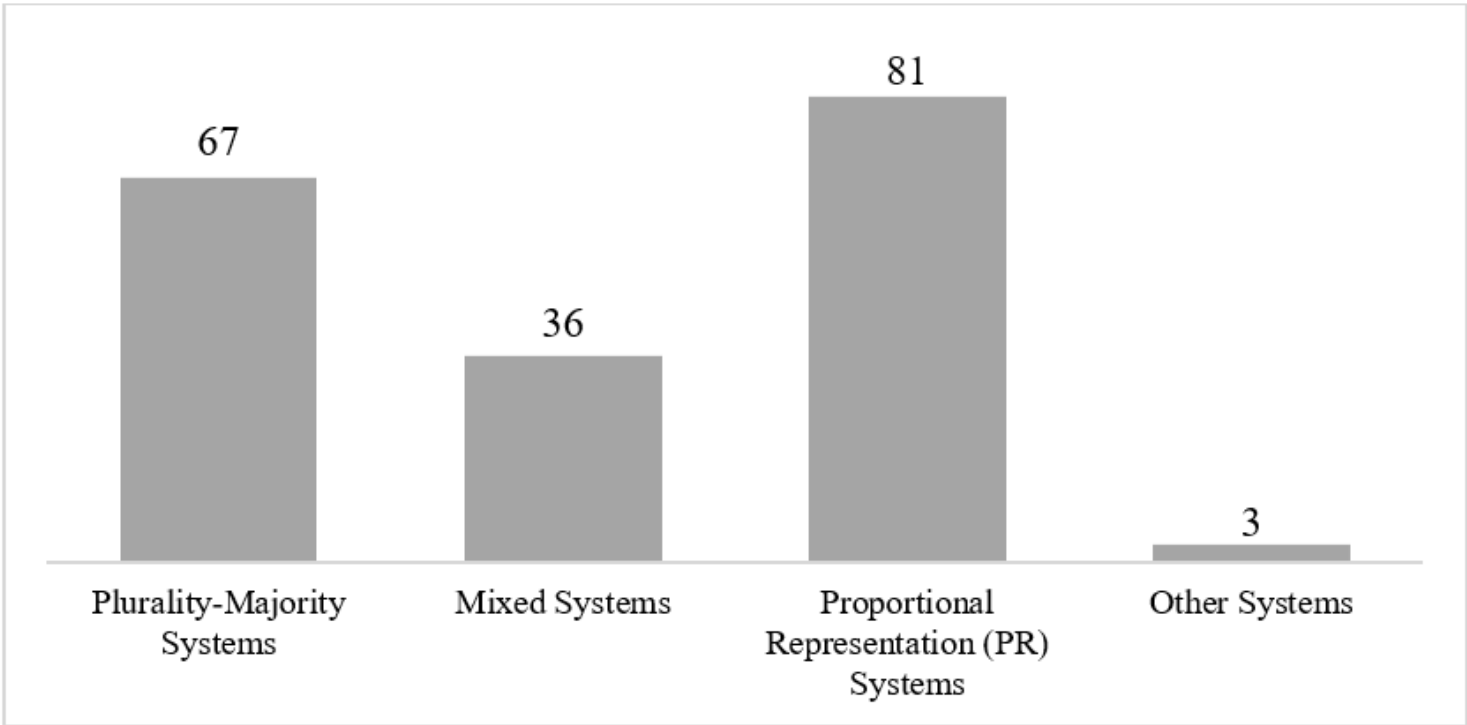


Figure 1

The Number of Countries Adopting Electoral Systems

Source: Compiled by the Authors.

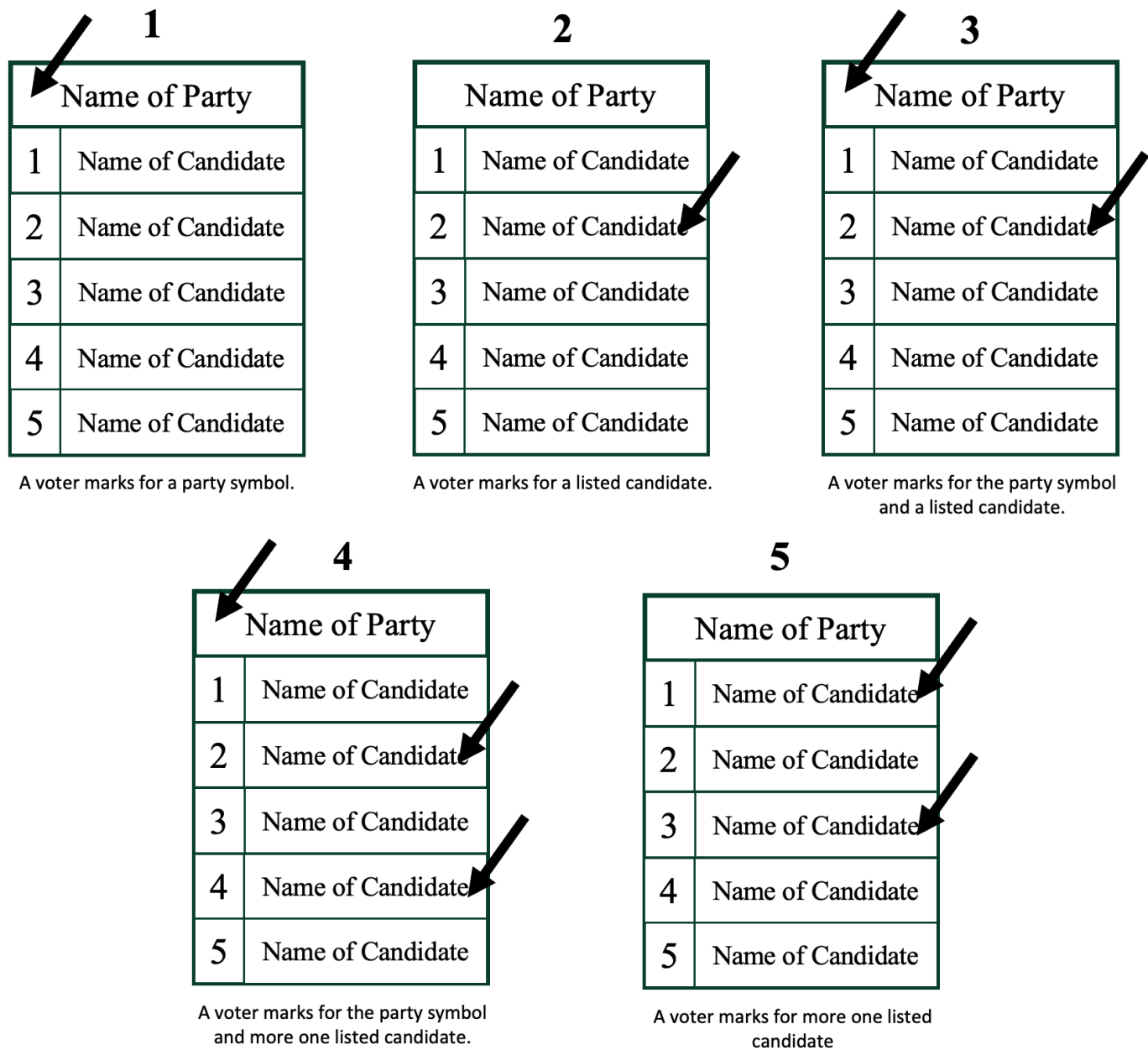


Figure 2

MLPR’s Valid Ballot Paper

Source: Designed by the Authors (2025).

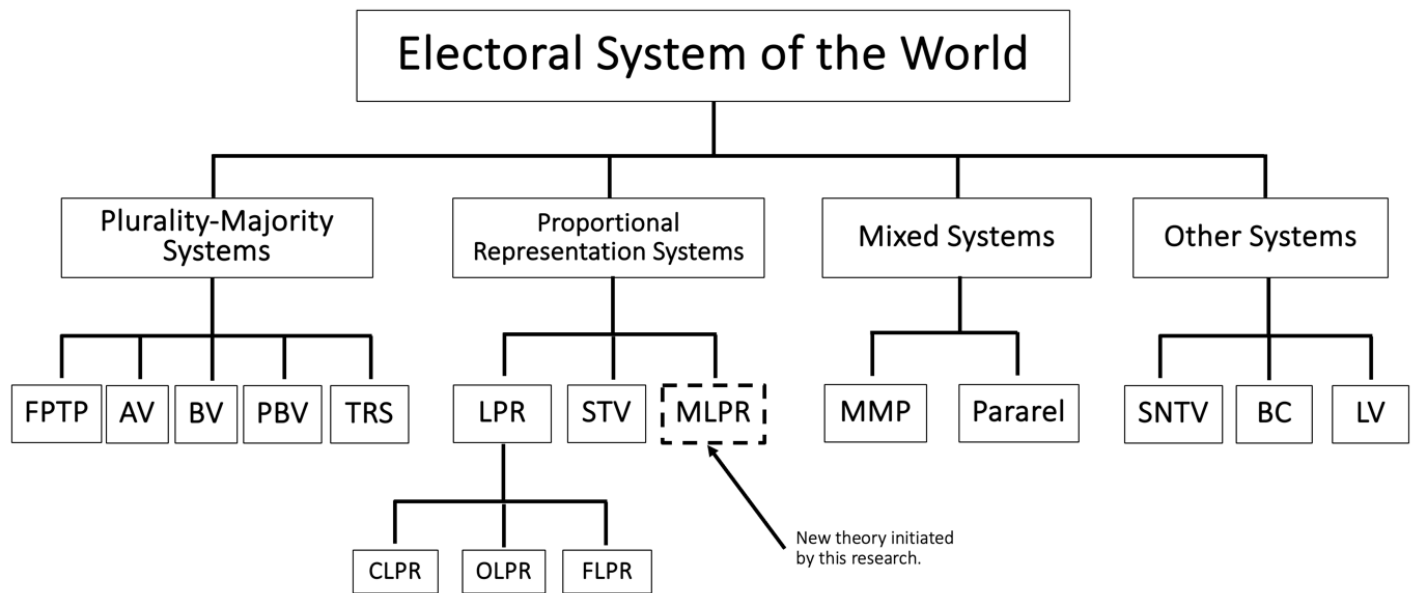


Figure 3

The Contribution of MLPR in the Electoral System

Source: Designed by the Authors (2025).