



The Politics of Electoral Reform: Changing the Rules of Democracy

By Alan Renwick

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Elections lie at the heart of democracy, and this book seeks to understand how the rules governing those elections are chosen. Drawing on both broad comparisons and detailed case studies, it focuses upon the electoral rules that govern what sorts of preferences voters can express and how votes translate into seats in a legislature. Through detailed examination of electoral reform politics in four countries (France, Italy, Japan, and New Zealand), Alan Renwick shows how major electoral system changes in established democracies occur through two contrasting types of reform process. Renwick rejects the simple view that electoral systems always straightforwardly reflect the interests of the politicians in power. Politicians' motivations are complex; politicians are sometimes unable to pursue reforms they want; occasionally, they are forced to accept reforms they oppose. The Politics of Electoral Reform shows how voters and reform activists can have real power over electoral reform.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Renwick's creative application of rational-choice inspired theoretical frameworks to electoral system choice is both innovative and enlightening. Theoretically-informed qualitative analysis of this sort is rare, and this volume provides a much-needed complement to the many quantitative studies of electoral system design."
Sarah Birch, Department of Government, University of Essex

"This is an agenda setter for the next generation of electoral systems research. Renwick makes a major contribution by combining recognition that there is more than one path to electoral reform with a schema that enables us to move beyond a series of narratives to more systematic understanding."
Richard S. Katz, Department of Political Science, Johns Hopkins University

"Alan Renwick has produced a well-argued study of 'the long and winding road' to electoral system change. Thoughtful and original, this is a well-told tale of miscalculation and misadventure, certain to be much cited. A fine contribution."
Stephen Levine ONZM, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

"The past two decades have witnessed an explosion in research on electoral systems, telling us pretty much all we could ever hope to know about how they impact on our wider political institutions - in other words about electoral systems as independent variables. This book is the first major cross-national study of its type to turn the tables on electoral systems, to examine them as the dependent variables, as the things to be explained. In this definitive work, Renwick closely scrutinizes, compares and explains the electoral reform processes of key industrialized democracies over the past twenty years."
David Farrell, School of Politics and International Relations, University College Dublin

About the Author

Alan Renwick is a Lecturer in Comparative Politics at the University of Reading.

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