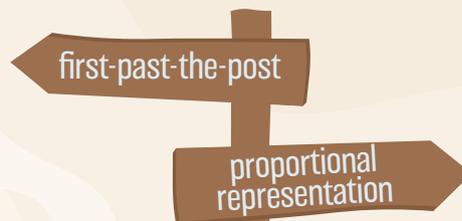


# ELECTORAL SYSTEM AT A CROSSROADS

Recalculation of the 2015 Election Results  
under the Proportional Representation System

Nu Tsen Mun | October 2020





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# Foreword

In the 1990 election, 79.7% of the seats in the parliament were occupied by a party that had received 59.8% of the popular votes. In the 2010 election, 78.5% of the elected seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw were occupied by a party that had received 56.7% of the popular votes. In the 2015 election, 79% of the elected seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw were occupied by a party that had received 57.2% of popular votes. These election results clearly show the discrepancies between the number of popular votes received on the one hand and of the seats won in parliament on the other hand.

In addition, only 23 out of more than 90 registered political parties contesting in the 2015 election won seats at the union or state and regional level. At the union level, only 13 parties won seat(s) in both houses combined, which accounted for only 15% of all political parties contesting in the election. These results go against the fundamental principles of representative democracy. If these practices continue, they could become major obstacles to strengthening democracy and enhancing democratic practices in the country.

These three general elections, held in 1990, 2010 and 2015, have one thing in common; it is the “winner takes all”, first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system, under which they were all held. Actually, the above-mentioned discrepancies between the number of popular votes received and seats won in parliament is an inherent problem of the FPTP system. Not only does this discrepancy violate the fundamental principles of representative democracy, it is very problematic in a sense that it could become another major source of grievances and tensions among different communities, especially in a multi-ethnic country like Burma/Myanmar.

That is why, this paper has examined the effect of the current FPTP electoral system as compared to a potential proportional representation (PR) electoral system on the level of parliament representation among different parties, while holding other variables, such as party policies, campaign strategies, popularity of candidates, and so on, constant. Doing that, the paper has investigated which electoral system would be fairer and create a better representation for diverse communities, with the ultimate goal of strengthening representative democracy through fair election results.

As this paper will demonstrate, while the PR system encourages the emergence of strong opposition parties, simply changing the FPTP to a PR electoral system will not be enough to guarantee full representation. In addition to the electoral system itself, other factors such as voter turnout, voting patterns, party policies, campaign strategies, and popularity of candidates also have different levels of effect on the election results. In short, a better representation is a more diverse parliament. A more diverse parliament is a more inclusive institution, and more collective decision-making, which are all steps towards not only a stronger democracy, but also a possibility of ethnic equality and national reconciliation.

The Salween Institute for Public Policy would like to express our gratitude for the support from our many partners and friends who recognize the importance of such a critical issue as strengthening democracy, enhancing democratic practices, and the need for the issue to be studied and discussed widely among the public. A special acknowledgement goes to our research mentor, Dr. Radka Antalíková, for her editorial assistance throughout the process of writing this paper. Most importantly, we recognize our Salween Institute team for all forms of their invaluable contributions, without which this project would have not been completed.

***Salween Institute for Public Policy***



# Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Understanding Electoral Systems	3
2.1. Majoritarian System	3
2.2. Proportional Representation System	5
3. Myanmar's Electoral System	7
4. Methodology	11
5. Analysis of the 2015 Election Results	15
5.1. Pyithu Hluttaw	15
5.2. Shan State Hluttaw	18
5.3. Ayeyarwady Regional Hluttaw	20
6. Scenario Analysis of the 2015 Election Results under Proportional Representation System	23
6.1. Pyithu Hluttaw	23
6.2. Shan State Hluttaw	25
6.3. Ayeyarwady Regional Hluttaw	26
7. Discussion and Conclusion	29



first-past-the-post

proportional  
representation

# 1.

## Introduction

While there are many kinds of electoral systems around the world, most of them fall into two distinct categories; namely, majoritarian systems and proportional representation (PR) systems. Choosing between these systems is an important political choice in any democracy, since electoral systems are crucial for enabling representation reflective of the existing demographics in every country. Particularly countries transitioning to democracy have to consider the issue of fair representation, most notably through increasing participation of political parties with divergent beliefs, in order to strengthen democracy (Reynolds et al., 2008). Failing to do so, especially in a country as diverse as Myanmar, has the potential to exacerbate existing grievances and even become a new source of grievance.

Under the current constitution that was adopted in 2008, Myanmar has held two general elections so far; in 2010 and 2015. The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), led by General Thein Sein, won the 2010 election and came into power. When President Thein Sein began to implement political and economic liberalization in the country, his unprecedented initiatives were welcomed by many, both domestically and internationally (Beech, 2012; Swe Win, 2016). Specifically, Myanmar citizens' hope for democracy and democratic rights began to be cautiously renewed. Overall, the 2010 election was undeniably a step forward on the country's transition to democracy, as people got the opportunity to elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf, which is a crucial element of the democratic system.

The second general election was held in 2015. It is widely accepted that this particular election was all about power transfer from the military, impersonated in the retired General Thein Sein, to the National League for Democracy (NLD) for the purpose of the country's democratic transition moving forward (The Irrawaddy, 2019). In total 90 political parties and 310 independent candidates contested in the national election, which was a sign of a multi-party system (The Carter Center, 2016). Yet, only 23% of the contesting political parties (22 in number) and 1.6% of independent candidates (5 in number) became seated in the parliament (U Sai Kyaw Thu, 2019). Moreover, according to the election results, with the slogan "Time to change," the NLD won 79% of elected parliament seats at the union level (390 out of 491 in number): 80% of seats (135 in number) in the Upper House and 79% of seats (255 in number) in the Lower House. In the parliaments at the state and regional level, the NLD occupied all except Shan and Rakhine States. Overall, both the union and state/regional levels became over-represented with the NLD majority.

This suggests that although the 2015 election was free and fair in terms of competition, the current electoral system of Myanmar, "First Past the Post" (FPTP), or "winner takes all," did not, in fact, create a fair result, as it in general does not enable a fair share of seats according to the number of votes each political party receives. Instead, in FPTP, the candidate who has the most votes wins regardless of having, for instance, less than half of the votes; while the rest of the candidates, often small parties and disadvantaged groups, are left with nothing. As a result, these groups do not get their preferred representatives to raise their voices in parliament, while the winner who represents only some people becomes the representative of the whole constituency. Thus,

Myanmar's current electoral system is not creating fair representation of political parties in parliament, although the common purpose of election is choosing people's representatives at the decision-making level.

In a modern democratic society, and especially in a multi-ethnic nation like Myanmar, each ethnic group has its preferred political parties or candidates for representing them in parliament; misrepresentation or no representation of these groups could give rise to a number of problems. It is true that, in practice, full representation in parliament is almost impossible to achieve. However, fair representation to some extent is important in order to reduce tensions among diverse groups (Williams, 2005). A country's political willingness is necessary to adopt an electoral system that would create fair representation or, alternatively, to re-design the current electoral system so it becomes more representative.

This paper argues that the current electoral system in Myanmar is neither fair nor representative for most political parties in the country. That is why, the paper aims to examine the effect of the current FPTP electoral system as compared to a potential PR electoral system on the level of representation, while holding other variables, such as party policies, campaign strategies, the popularity of candidates, and so on, constant. In order to do so, the paper will first briefly describe how the two most common electoral systems in the world produce different election results. Under this section, the benefits and drawbacks of each electoral system and their main features will also be presented. After that, the current electoral system of Myanmar will be examined through the analysis and re-analysis of the 2015 election results. Lastly, the findings of this data analysis will demonstrate which electoral system would be fairer and create more representation for political parties in Myanmar, with the ultimate goal of strengthening democracy through fair election results.

# 2. Understanding Electoral Systems

The electoral system is a method of electing government by counting people's votes in order to choose election winners – or people's representatives (Williams, 2005). Different electoral systems have different purposes; for instance, they can be designed as tools for conflict resolution, gender inclusion, and so on. Each nation has its own particular problems and in order to deal with those, a variety of electoral systems are practiced globally, as “there is no one-size-fits-all” solution (Williams, 2005, p. 91). For this reason, a country's electoral system is designed or adapted by considering the country's current political or economic situation.

Around the world, there are many electoral systems to be studied, but fundamentally, they can be divided into four groups: 1) plurality/majoritarian systems; 2) PR systems; 3) mixed systems; and 4) others. The two most common systems, the majoritarian and PR, can be found in most democratic countries. Specifically, 23.5% (46 out of 199) of the world's countries practice the FPTP system, which belongs to majoritarian systems, while the PR is utilized in 35.6% (72 out of 199) of countries (Reynolds et al., 2008). These two systems will also be analyzed in this paper, since the FPTP (majoritarian) system is Myanmar's current electoral system and the PR system is proposed to solve the FPTP system's challenges.

## 2.1. Majoritarian System

The majoritarian system, also known as “Plurality,” is widely described as the simplest one, because the candidates or parties with the highest number of votes are the winners (Reynolds et al., 2008). The system varies depending on the specific way it is practiced, but its essence is always the same; “the winner takes all.” The following are five types of the majoritarian system which are practiced around the world.

First, the FPTP system is a majoritarian system that has single-member districts in which people vote for individual candidates. The candidate with the most votes becomes the district representative. This kind of system can be found in old democratic countries, such as the United States of America. Second, the FPTP transforms into “Block Vote” when it is practiced by electing several representatives in each electoral district (Reynolds et al., 2008). In this system, voters have to elect up to a number of seats to be filled in the respective constituency. The candidates with the most votes receive seats in parliament.

Generally, the majoritarian system always elects individuals, but “Party Block Vote” is slightly different. Party Block Vote uses multi-member districts and voters are supposed to vote for parties with one single vote. The party with the most votes wins all seats. Next, Alternative Vote is a system in which voters are required to rank their favorite candidates according to their preference as their first choice, second choice, third choice, and so on (Reynolds et al., 2008).

Unlike the count in FPTP, in this system, a candidate is immediately elected if he or she has won with the majority of votes (which can be 50 percent plus one; Reynolds et al., 2008).

Finally, the “Two-Round System” has two rounds of election, as its name suggests. This electoral system is usually used when no candidate or party receives an absolute majority of votes; the winner is then declared after the second round of voting. Overall, the common feature of all majoritarian systems is that they always favor candidates with the most votes. In order to make sure the winner wins with absolute majority of votes, that is, with more than half of the total votes, the Alternative Vote and Two-Round systems are practiced (Reynolds et al., 2008).

One of the advantages of majoritarian systems is that they can establish good ties between elected representatives and their respective electoral districts (Reynolds et al., 2008). As majoritarian systems often use single-member districts, each district (e.g. city or township) elects only one representative. Representatives often come from a given region and are therefore likely to be receptive to the needs of people living in that area. At the same time, voters can more easily assess the performance of their representatives and decide whether to vote for them in the next election or not.

Moreover, the majoritarian system enables the election of broadly-based political parties and candidates in cases when the country’s electoral districts are not designed fairly. This can be achieved by drawing district lines in such a way that each party’s equal share of districts is retained. In other words, if a party has 34% overall support, the district lines can be drawn so that the party achieves majority in 34% of the districts. That way, the party still manages to receive its fair share of the legislature (Williams, 2005). At the same time, the majoritarian system sometimes also favors candidates from smaller parties that are geographically concentrated (Moscrop, 2016). For instance, Ta’ang, a minority group geographically concentrated in Shan State, won three seats in the Shan State Parliament in 2015 precisely thanks to this characteristic of Myanmar’s FPTP system.

In addition, the majoritarian system “gives rise to single-party governments” (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 36), which again advantages big political parties. This is what happened to the NLD in 2015, when it received 87% of the seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw with only 57% of the total votes. In other words, the system gives “seat bonuses” to the largest party in particular and large parties in general. An advantage of a powerful single-party government is that the opponent should theoretically still have an adequate number of seats in order to play a vital role in monitoring the government’s functions as well as to view itself as a credible alternative to the government (Reynolds et al., 2008). Finally, the majoritarian system is simple to use and understand. For electoral officials, the counting of votes is easier than in other electoral systems (Reynolds et al., 2008).

Yet, the majoritarian system also has its drawbacks. As stated previously, in this system, whoever gets the most votes wins. Thus, the winner takes all; the minority receives nothing. The system typically gives the majority control of a greater portion of the legislature than is its share of votes, as illustrated in the example with the NLD above. In addition, the system splits votes between political parties; when the winner becomes the ruler of a district, the votes for the losing parties become wasted.

Moreover, the majoritarian system excludes not only minorities from fair representation, but also women from the legislature. Specifically, “women are less likely to be elected to the legislature under plurality/majority systems than under PR ones” (Reynolds et. al., 2008, p. 51). Although the majoritarian

system is indeed simple to use, it is rather questionable when it comes to fair representation. Usually, it excludes small groups from the legislature, which could be seen as undemocratic (Williams, 2005).

To sum up, the nature of the majoritarian system is that it favors strong political parties. When it comes to representation and inclusion, on the other hand, the majoritarian system is not suitable for small political parties and minorities. Instead, it has been argued that the main feature of the majoritarian system, particularly of FPTP, is systematic under-representation of smaller opposition parties. Moreover, “The winner takes all attitude leaves rulers blind to other views as well as to the needs and desires of opposition voters, turning both the election and government into zero-sum contests” (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 27). Thus, when it comes to fair representation, it can be argued that the majoritarian system should be considered irrelevant for a multi-ethnic country like Myanmar.

## 2.2. Proportional Representation System

In the PR system, voters elect a large number of representatives of their constituency and these representatives are then divided proportionally between different parties. “The purpose of the PR system is to consciously reduce the disparity between a party’s share of the national vote and its share of the parliamentary seats” (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 29). In other words, the PR system aims to create accurate representation in the legislature by sharing votes between political parties and thus preventing the domination by one big party. For example, if a party receives 30% of votes, 30% of its representatives are seated. Hence, “The winner does not take all; the winner takes only its fair share, and the smaller parties all take their fair share too” (Williams, 2005, p. 198). That is why, the PR system is used more often in multi-ethnic nations as compared with the FPTP system.

There are two types of PR systems: “List PR” and “Single Transferable Vote.” Firstly, List PR or “pure PR” is the simplest form of PR systems. Here, “voters vote for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of votes in the electoral district” (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 74). There are two options under the List PR, closed-list and open-list, which are both used in multi-member districts. In closed-list PR, voters vote for their party, while in open-list PR, voters express a preference for candidates on their party’s list (The Samara Centre for Democracy, 2016). So, in open-list PR, candidates with the most votes within a party receive seats if their party wins.

Secondly, Single Transferable Vote is “a preferential system in which the voter ranks candidates in a multi-member district and the candidates that surpass a specified quota of first-preference votes are immediately elected” (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 90). Voters normally vote for candidates rather than political parties, although a party-list option is also possible. The final result is determined through a series of counts.

A clear advantage of the PR system is that it tends to give parties proportional share of power, so that even smaller parties are able to participate in the country’s legislature (Williams, 2005). Moreover, unlike the majoritarian system, the PR system gives rise to very few wasted votes, which makes voters feel that their votes actually count. Thus, the PR system encourages small and minority political parties’ access to representation.

On the other hand, the PR system creates only a weak connection between elected representatives and their constituencies, as it breaks down the relationship between them. This is because the PR system sees the country as one big district, and so no legislator represents any particular district; instead, each legislator represents all the people of that country (Williams, 2005). In addition, several features of the PR system make it difficult for voters to understand and for election management bodies to manage in practice (Reynolds et al., 2008). For instance, ranking candidates or parties by voters' preference creates more work for the management body, since there are multiple calculation steps involved. Finally, even though the PR system ensures representation of almost any group in a society, it still excludes small parties by setting a quota – the minimum share of votes required to be able to enter parliament at all (Herron, Pekkanen, & Shugart, 2018).

All in all, the essence of the PR system is fair sharing of seats among political parties. The system is hence especially relevant for multi-ethnic nations, since it brings small and minority political parties through fair representation into parliament. Between PR and majoritarian systems, thus, every country needs to decide which is more relevant for its specific context, since each system has different impacts and serves different purposes. When building a democratic society, it is indeed important to choose the right electoral system, as this has the power to bring about political change as well as influence the stability of the society. Finally, it is important to remember that a successful electoral system in one country does not necessarily have to work in another.

# 3. Myanmar's Electoral System

Before looking at the electoral system in Myanmar, it is crucial to understand the structure of Myanmar's parliament. The Union Parliament has two houses, Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) and Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House). In the Amyotha Hluttaw, each state and region has to elect 12 representatives according to the article 10 of the UEC law. So, there are 168 elected representatives in total from seven states and seven regions, and 56 of these are directly appointed by the military. The Pyithu Hluttaw has a total number of 440 seats. Out of these, 110 are appointed by the military and 330 are chosen from the country's 330 townships (Myanmar, 2008). Overall, 25% seats in parliament are reserved for military representatives. At the state and regional level, each township has two representatives in the respective parliaments. Different states and regions have different numbers of representatives, as seats are reserved based on the number of townships of each state and region.

The elections for both the Union Hluttaw and the State and Regional Hluttaws are held simultaneously every five years. As there was one in 2015, the next general election will be in 2020 (Hluttaw Brochure Working Group, 2019). In terms of legislative competencies between the Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw, both houses can propose bills not listed by the union legislature according to the prescribed procedures, as stated in Chapter 4, Article 136 and 156 of the 2008 Constitution. If there is disagreement between the two houses, the proposal needs to be submitted to the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.

The current system for electing representatives to the Hluttaw in Myanmar is the FPTP system for both levels of government. This is not surprising, since the FPTP system is practiced primarily in countries historically influenced by the British (Reynolds et al., 2008). As stated before, in this system, the candidate with the most votes becomes the winner, while the other candidates receive nothing. Thus, this system makes it easy for the winner to become the majority in parliament. When this happens, it is sometimes called a "false majority" (Moscrop, Dias, & Ejeckam, n.d., p. 3), since such election result does not account for any minority votes (i.e. votes for the other, losing parties). Specifically in Myanmar, this feature of the FPTP system has given the NLD an overwhelming control of parliament, which is unfair to other parties that had failed to receive seats.

In some countries, electoral systems are embedded in detail in constitutions, which are naturally harder to amend than ordinary laws. In order to make a constitutional amendment, a referendum or a special majority in the legislature is also required in Myanmar. The following two articles of the 2008 Constitution exemplify conditions which are not fair for some political parties under the current electoral system. Specifically, regarding the formation of the State and Regional Hluttaws, Chapter 4, Article 161, Sub-Article (a) states that "the Regional or State Hluttaw shall be formed with the following persons: (a) representatives of the Region or State Hluttaw, two of each are elected from each township in the Regions or the States." This means that

the designation of Members of Parliament (MPs) at the state level is based on townships. In practice, however, each township in regions and especially states has asymmetrical populations; for example, some townships with large populations in Kachin State, such as Hpakant and Mohnyin, have two representatives each. At the same time, a township with a small population such as Putao also has two representatives. Thus, it is not fair for townships with massive populations to only have two representatives, while it is rather effective for townships with small populations. Hence, this creates unfair representation in state and regional parliaments.

Moreover, in terms of minority group representation, Article 161, Sub-Article (c) mentions that “each [representative of State Hluttaw] is elected from each national race determined by the authorities concerned as having a population which constitutes 0.1 percent and above of the population of the Union, of the remaining national races other than those who have already obtained respective State or Self-Administered Area in that State.” According to this article, “an ethnic group with a population of less than 0.1% of the nation of 51,19,420 cannot have state and regional representation that effects minority/disadvantaged groups with a population of less than 51,419. an ethnic group which has under 0.1% of the country’s population of 51,419,420 cannot have representation in state and regional parliaments, which affects minority/disadvantaged groups whose population is under 51,419 (U Win Kyi, 2015). All in all, it can be argued that the election law entrenched in the 2008 Constitution does not create an equal chance to all minority groups in the country.

That is why, the suggestion to adopt the PR system was raised by some political parties after the 2012 by-elections. Specifically, the first formal push came from an alliance of 10 democratic and ethnic minority parties in the form of a letter to the Election Commission in July 2012 (Radio Free Asia, 2012). The Constitutional Tribunal was responsible for checking whether the PR electoral system would be relevant under the current constitution. Unfortunately, the tribunal’s officials resigned from their posts without providing an interpretation of this issue.

In 2013, the National Democratic Force tried to discuss the PR system again in the Amyotha Hluttaw and the Rakhine Nationalities Development officially requested the Constitutional Tribunal to determine whether the PR system would be constitutional to practice in Myanmar; however, the tribunal did not respond to this request either and never even stated its reason for not doing so.

Interestingly, in 2014, the possibility to adopt an alternative electoral system for the 2015 election was discussed again, thanks to the approval of two proposals from the Pyithu Hluttaw and Amyotha Hluttaw (Nyein Nyein, 2014). The PR issue was at that time resubmitted by a USDP MP, Aung Zin. According to the Hluttaw agenda, the MP’s aim was “to implement a suitable electoral system for the Pyithu Hluttaw which conforms to Myanmar’s situation” (Ye Htut, 2019, p. 132). In his concluding remarks, the MP mentioned that the PR system was the only electoral system suitable for a multi-ethnic nation like Myanmar.

The Pyithu Hluttaw decided to debate this motion with 314 yes votes and 42 no votes (Ye Htut, 2019). During the debate, the USDP and National Democratic Force supported the motion, while the ethnic political parties opposed it. What is more, 22 ethnic minority MPs left the Hluttaw to show their opposition to the PR system idea. Originally, Chin, Shan, and Rakhine MPs had thought that the PR system would favor ethnic parties, but apparently realized later on that it could reduce their number of seats and hence decided against it (Ye Htut, 2019). During three days of debate, 39 MPs participated; 18 supported the motion while 18 opposed it, and 3 were non-committal. After the debate, Shwe

Mann from the Commission for the Assessment of Legal Affairs and Special Issues claimed that “he had corresponded with Myanmar’s Constitutional Tribunal and they had told him a switch to the new electoral system would be unconstitutional” (Fisher, 2014). Thus, the debate on changing the electoral system went silent in the legislature and no major changes were seen in the 2015 election in this respect.

It is important to note that, according to a former USDP MP Ye Tun, “Only after the decision on the electoral system by the Hluttaw, it [the proposal to adopt an alternative electoral system] is supposed to be reviewed by the Constitutional Tribunal” (Ye Htut, 2019, p. 135). This means that Shwe Mann had probably skipped the step of making a decision in parliament first and instead, directly submitted the proposal to the Constitutional Tribunal. Regarding Shwe Mann’s decision, Aung Zin said that he had realized that “Shwe Mann had used the PR issue to bargain with Aung San Suu Kyi, who strongly opposed the PR system and saw PR as a threat to an NLD majority in the Hluttaws. That is why Shwe Mann played as chairman of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw Legal Affairs and Special Issues Assessment Commission after the 2015 election because Aung San Suu Kyi believed that she owed Shwe Mann” (Ye Htut, 2019, p. 135). This suggests that there were internal politics between the two big parties at play during this particular attempt to adopt the PR system as the country’s alternative electoral system.

To sum up, even though Myanmar practices the FPTP system, the attempts to adopt the PR system have been made by various political parties since 2012. At the same time, the country’s electoral system is not the only factor that is creating unfair representation in parliament. As mentioned above, there are also some unfair election laws that need to be amended. Thus, Myanmar should find a way to solve the problem of misrepresentation by balancing the limits and possibilities of its electoral system. In order to adopt an electoral system that would create fair representation, it is important to reflect on the current political constraints as well as other factors that prevent this adoption.



# 4.

## Methodology

The purpose of this paper is to determine the benefits and disadvantages of the current electoral system from the perspective of political parties that contested in the 2015 general election<sup>1</sup>. Through data analysis of the 2015 election results and report on the opinion polls by the People's Alliance for Credible Elections (2019), readers will gain an insight into the real situation of the political parties in Myanmar and how the current electoral system favors some of them but disadvantages others. At the same time, the paper will demonstrate how the current parliaments would look like if the country adopted the PR system, so that readers can realize how the number of seats assigned to different parties changes by practicing different electoral systems. By the end of this paper, it is intended for readers to find out which electoral system and to what extent creates fair representation by bringing a different number of political parties into parliament. Overall, the data analysis presented in this paper should be helpful for political parties' preparations for the 2020 election.

First, the analysis of the 2015 election results will be presented; specifically, how the current electoral system of Myanmar has impacted different political parties at the union and state/regional levels. For that purpose, at the union level, this paper will focus on analyzing the results for Pyithu Hluttaw, as this is where the majority of decision-making in the legislative process takes place. For the state and regional levels, Shan State election results will be analyzed too, since domination by one majority party is less pronounced in its parliament compared to other states and regions. Moreover, the paper will also discuss the election results for the Ayeyarwady regional parliament. This is because Ayeyarwady Region has a majority Bamar population with diverse ethnic groups, and can thus be compared to Shan State which is predominantly ethnic.

Second, after the analysis of the 2015 election results under the current electoral system, a scenario analysis will be presented, showing how the parties' seats would have been distributed if these had been calculated proportionally by the amount of votes each party received. The scenario analysis will be calculated using the List PR system, as it is the most common form of the PR system and the easiest to use. Moreover, closed-list instead of open-list PR will be used, since some preconditions would have been necessary in order to calculate results under open-list PR. For example, voters would have been required to rank all candidates in their order of preference.

When it comes to the specific steps of data analysis, first, relevant data sets were obtained from Phandeeay and verified by corresponding election results from the Union Election Commission. Then, the coded data was placed in a Google spreadsheet and recalculated with the use of essential statistics and mathematical formulas. Specifically, it was necessary to calculate the so-called "Quota", which is a quantity of votes used in many PR systems to determine how to award parliament seats to political parties. In this paper, the "Hare

<sup>1</sup> Comparative analysis between the 2010 and 2015 election results was, unfortunately, not possible, due to inconsistencies in data availability and the fact that the 2010 election can only hardly be labeled as democratic.

Quota” (also known as “Natural Quota”) formula was used, because it is the simplest one and it works in favor of small parties (Provisional Legislative Council Secretariat, n.d.). Hare Quota refers to a number of parliament seats awarded to a political party obtained by dividing the number of total votes in the election by the number of total seats in parliament (see below):

$$\text{Hare quota} = \frac{\text{number of total votes}}{\text{number of total seats to be allocated in the election}}$$

For example, hare quota for Shan State parliament was calculated as follows:

$$\text{Hare quota (SSP)} = \frac{1,939,698 \text{ (number of total votes)}}{96 \text{ (number of total seats)}}$$

$$\text{Hare quota (SSP)} = 20,205.1875$$

In this example, the obtained quota means that those contesting parties in Shan State that received fewer votes than the quota (ca. 20,205 votes) would have not received any seats in the Shan State parliament. So, these parties would have been excluded and their votes were thus subtracted from the original total amount of votes, as they would have become wasted. Then, the new total was calculated. With the new total amount of votes, the hare quota was obtained again as shown below:

$$\text{New total (SSP)} = 1,939,698 \text{ (number of total votes)} - 72,837 \text{ (wasted votes)}$$

$$\text{New total (SSP)} = 1,866,861$$

$$\text{New hare quota (SSP)} = \frac{1,866,861 \text{ (new total)}}{96 \text{ (number of total seats)}}$$

$$\text{New hare quota (SSP)} = 19,446.46$$

$$19,446.46 \text{ votes} = 1 \text{ seat}$$

In the next step, it was then possible to calculate the number of seats awarded to each contesting party that obtained the minimum number of votes. For example, in Shan State, the NLD received 531,986 votes, so the following calculation shows how many seats the NLD would have received if the votes had been shared by a hare quota in the PR system:

$$\text{NLD seats in PR (SSP)} = \frac{531,986 \text{ (votes received in Shan State)}}{19,446.46 \text{ (new hare quota)}}$$

$$\text{NLD seats in PR (SSP)} = 27.35 \text{ (27)}$$

More examples can be seen in the table below (see Table 1). It is important to note that after all parties were allocated their respective seats, some seats remained unfilled due to the decimal remainders. In order to award these left-over seats, the so-called “Largest Remainder Method” was applied in this analysis, where such seats are awarded “in the order of the number of left-over seats they [the parties] possess” (Reynolds et al., et al., 2008, p. 178). In other words, parties with the highest number of left-over seats were assigned the unfilled seats; in this specific case, it was the USDP.

**Table 1. Calculation of hare quota: Example of the Shan State Hluttaw**

Party	Votes	Hare quota	Full quota seats	Remainder	Remaining seats	Total seats
NLD	531,986	27.35	27	0.35	0	27
USDP	524,107	26.95	26	0.95	1	27
SNLD	352,035	18.10	18	0.10	0	18
..... (other parties)	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Total	1,939,698	96	.....	.....	.....	96

Finally, after the analysis of the election results under the current electoral system and their re-analysis in the scenario analysis according to the explanation above, the comparative findings will be discussed with respect to which electoral system works (or would work) best and, more broadly, how different electoral systems favor different political groups under different conditions.



# 5. Analysis of the 2015 Election Results

## 5.1. Pyithu Hluttaw

According to the 2015 election data, 81 political parties contested for the Pyithu Hluttaw and 12 out of these managed to get seats in the parliament. As mentioned earlier, there are 330 seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw to be occupied. However, there were seven constituencies inaccessible for elections in 2015, mostly in Shan State. Hence, only 323 seats got occupied by elected representatives and the rest, 110 seats, were filled with military appointees.

Figure 1 highlights the difference between the percentages of seats and votes in the 2015 election for the Pyithu Hluttaw<sup>2</sup>. According to the figure, the NLD had the highest percentage of votes, 57.2%, and received 78.95% of elected seats (255 in number). Since almost all seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw became occupied by the NLD, the previously described consequences of the FPTP system, namely single-party governments with seat bonuses for the largest party (Reynolds et al., 2008), happened in reality. As a result, the legislature became dominated by one majority party.

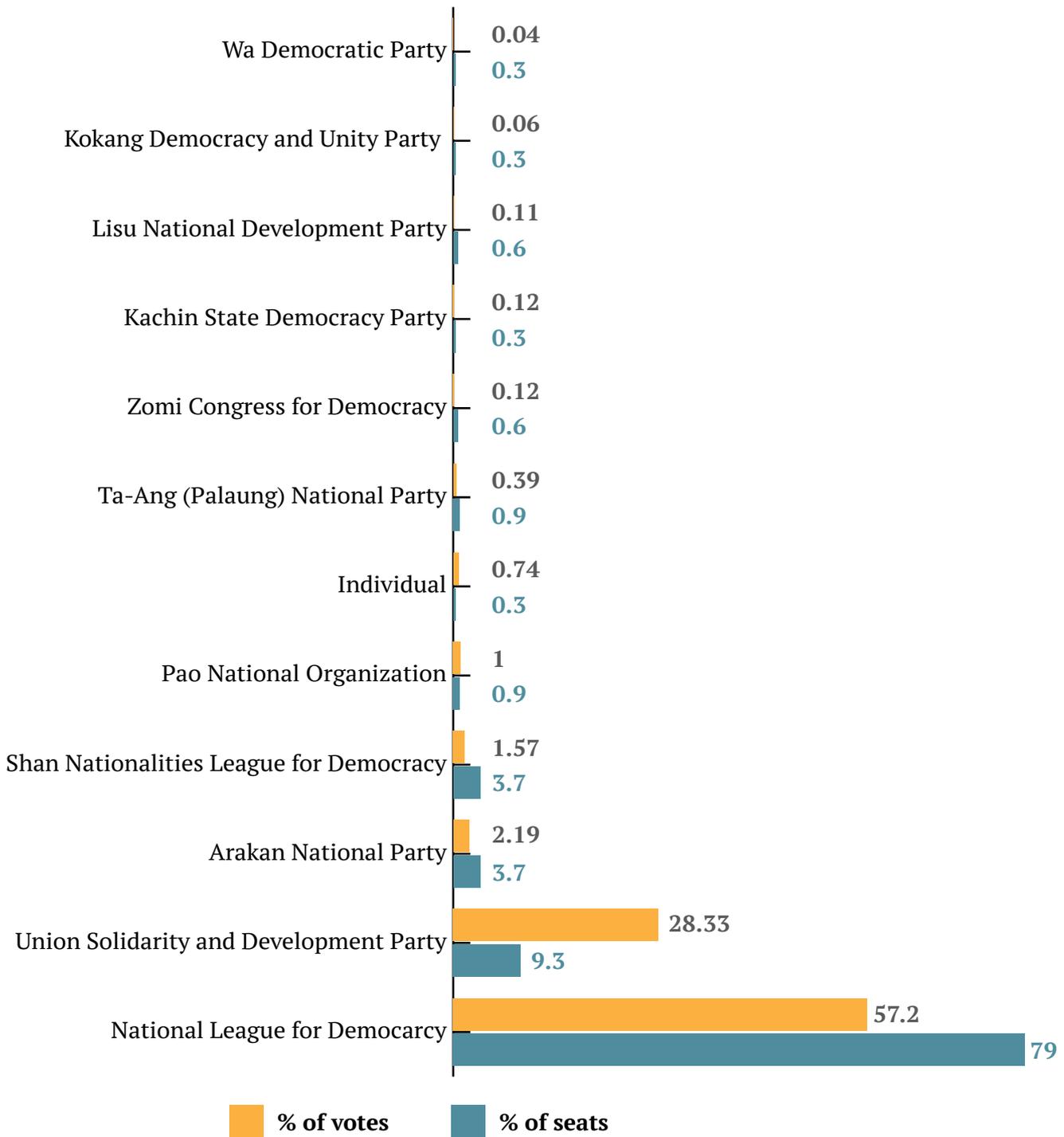
In theory, the FPTP system produces a clear opposition to government, but in this case, it is different in practice. Specifically, in terms of number of seats for the opposition parties, the USDP received only 9% of the elected seats (30 in number), while the majority of the smaller parties which is 85.2% (69 out of the total 81 contesting parties) did not even make it to parliament; those that did, occupied only 12% of seats combined (38 in number; see Figure 2). Hence, the number of seats for the opposition parties became meaningless, since with such low presence in parliament, they have not been able to represent their voters effectively in the decision-making process. This has been creating a constraint on the strengthening of democracy in the country, because the opposition parties have not been strong enough to make check and balance in parliament.

Rather interesting is the difference between the Arakan National Party (ANP) and Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD; see Figure 1). Namely, in terms of percentage of votes, the ANP received 2.19% of the total votes, while the SNLD received 1.57%; yet, both parties won the same percentage of seats which is 3.7% (12 in number), which means that there is no standard of fairness under the FPTP system (Williams, 2005).

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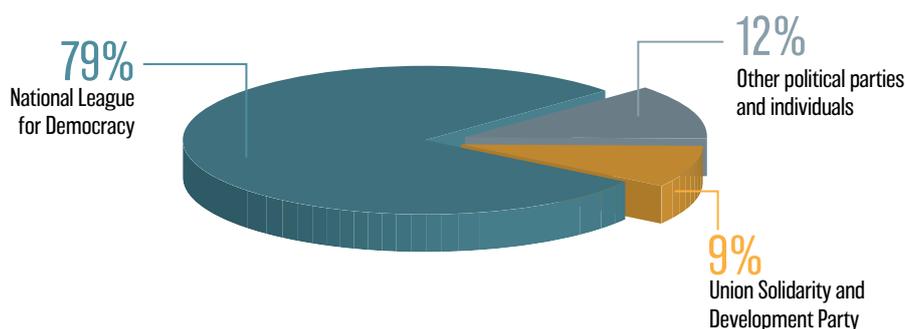
<sup>2</sup> Military appointees are not included in the overview, since they are not elected by civilians.

**Figure 1. The 2015 election results: Political parties' votes and seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw**



There is also a big gap in receiving votes among the parties. For example, except the NLD and the USDP, almost all of the other parties received fewer than 3% of the total votes. The reason for this big gap is because the two broadly based parties contested in almost all constituencies. The more constituencies a party contests in, the more possibility it has to gain a high number of votes. This also means that it is highly challenging for smaller or only regionally based parties to compete with these two parties when it comes to popularity. Moreover, in the case of the Pyithu Hluttaw, only 14.8% (12 in number) of political parties became seated, and the votes for the unseated parties/candidates – which became wasted – amounted to 8.1% of the total votes (1,821,146 in number).

**Figure 2. The 2015 election results: Overview of seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw**



Finally, to exemplify the unfair representation under the current electoral system of Myanmar, Table 2 displays the percentages of votes for the winning party and for the biggest losing party across 10 out of 55 townships in Shan State as constituencies in the Pyithu Hluttaw. The results clearly show that the winners do not demographically represent their respective constituencies; the candidates of the most votes simply won, while the rest of the candidates were left out. For example, among the Pyithu Hluttaw constituencies, the USDP won in Kutkai Township with 45% of the total votes, while the rest of the parties with 55% of the total votes did not make it to parliament. As a result, these groups did not get their preferred representatives to raise their voices in parliament, while the winner who represents only 45% of the voters became the representative of the whole constituency. All in all, the FPTP was not fair for most of the contesting political parties in 2015 and the legislation has been until today highly influenced by one winning party.

**Table 2. Percentage of votes for the winning party and the unseated parties across 10 townships in Shan State (union level)**

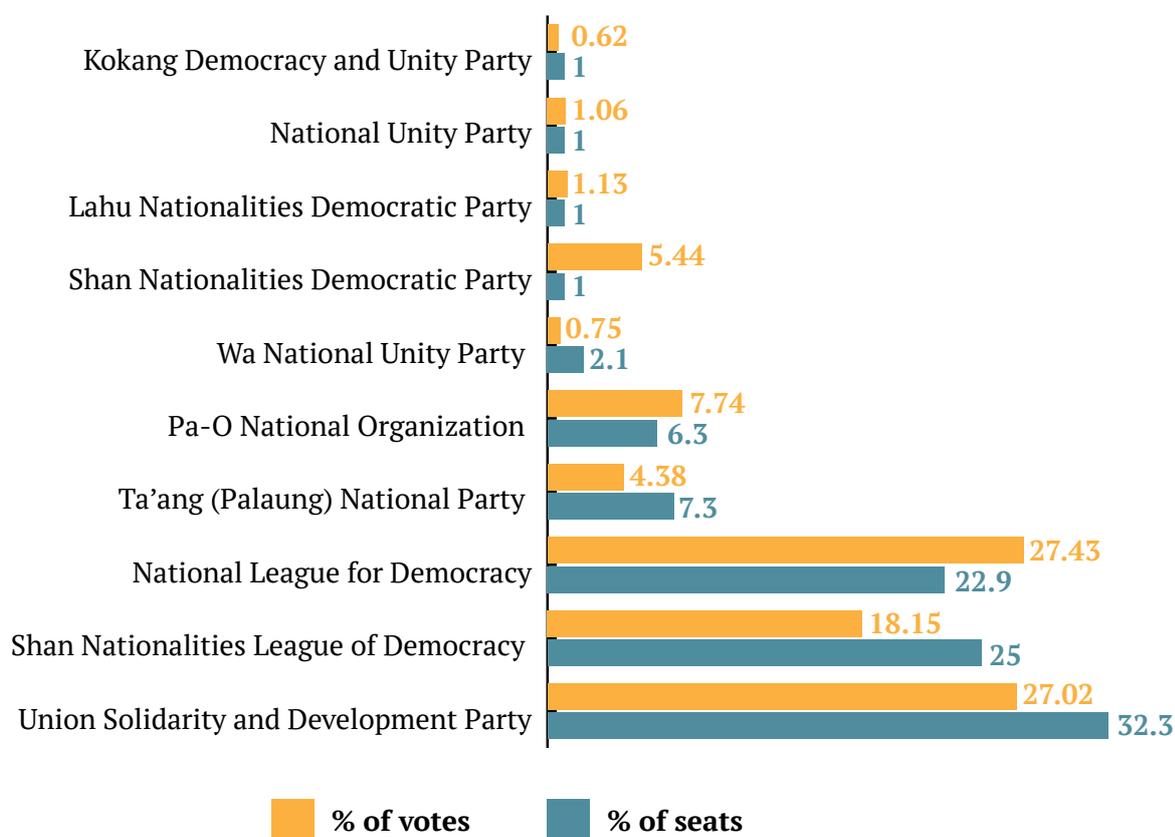
Constituency	Winning party	Winning party: % of votes	Unseated parties: % of votes
Kutkai	Union Solidarity and Development Party	45%	55%
Lashio	Union Solidarity and Development Party	34%	66%
Hseni	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy	39%	61%
Hsihseng	Pa-O National Organization	69%	31%
Kalaw	National League for Democracy	52%	48%
Kengtung	Union Solidarity and Development Party	38%	62%
Kunhing	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy	49%	51%
Kyaukme	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy	51%	49%
Langkho	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy	50%	50%
Kunlong	Kokang Democracy and Unity Party	29%	71%

## 5.2. Shan State Hluttaw

At the state level, each township gets to elect two representatives and, at the same time, each ethnic group with a population of more than 0.1% of the country's total population gets to elect one representative for their ethnic voice in parliament. Due to the previously mentioned seven townships in Shan State that were non-accessible for casting votes at the time of the 2015 election, there were only 96 seats to be filled in the Shan State parliament instead of 110; plus, there were seven representatives from ethnic groups to be elected as ministers, and the remaining 36 seats went to military appointees. Therefore, there are 137 seats in total in the Shan State parliament today. In the 2015 election, 26 political parties contested in Shan State. 38.4% of political parties (10 in number) got into parliament and 6.3% of all votes (121,900 in number) for the other, left-out 61.6% parties (16 in number) became wasted.

Figure 3 shows the difference between the percentage of seats and votes in the Shan State parliament<sup>3</sup>. Specifically, it highlights the fact that only three political parties got to occupy a significant number of seats (see also Figure 4). Among them, the USDP had the highest percentage of seats – 32% to be exact (31 in number), while its percentage of votes (27%) was the same as the NLD's, though the latter only received 22.9% of seats (22 in number), which was not fair for the NLD. In this regard, the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy is even more interesting, as it had less votes than the two big parties (i.e. the NLD and USDP), but still got more seats – 25% to be exact (24 in number) – than the NLD.

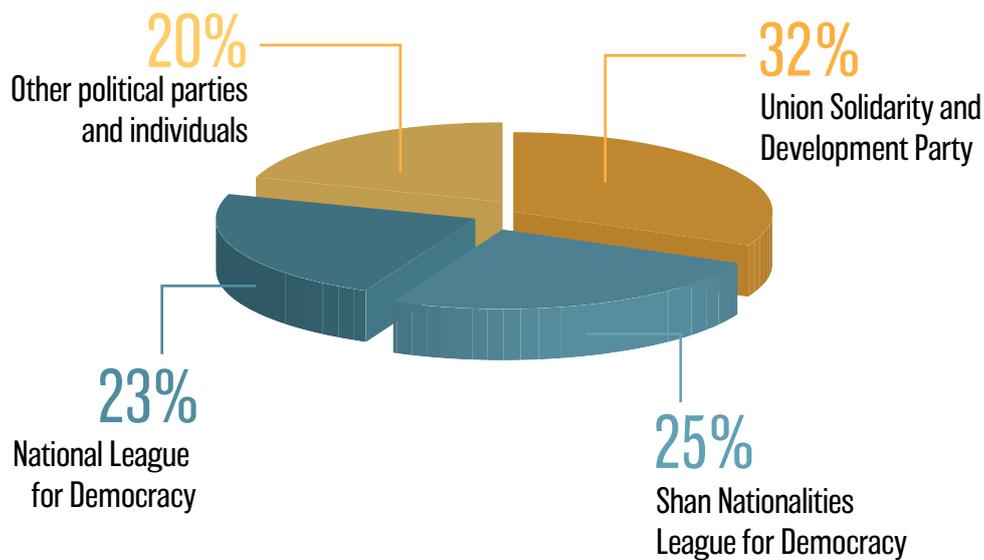
**Figure 3. The 2015 election results: Political parties' votes and seats in the Shan State Hluttaw**



<sup>3</sup> Military appointees are not included in the overview, since they are not elected by civilians. Similarly, the ministers of ethnic affairs are excluded as well, as they are marginalized in the decision-making process (Wagaru Mon, 2016).

The FPTP system can sometimes be a little tricky, since even though it in general advantages big parties, it does occasionally create more seats for small parties too. The Ta'ang National Party is an obvious example to mention, representing the geographically concentrated Ta'ang people living in northern Shan State. In the previous election, the Ta'ang National Party received 7.3% (7 in number) seats with 4.38% of the total votes (see Figure 3), while the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party got only 1% (1 in number) seats with 5.44% of the total votes. Hence, some small parties can also be favored under the FPTP system.

**Figure 4. The 2015 election results: Overview of seats in the Shan State Hluttaw**



Finally, regarding representation, results similar to the ones in the Pyithu Hluttaw can also be found at the state level in Shan State. Table 3 shows nine townships in Eastern Shan State, Northern Shan State, and Southern Shan State that demonstrate that the current electoral system is unfair to some groups in terms of demographic representation. For instance, in Constituency 1 of Lashio, the NLD won with 31% of votes, while the rest of the parties with 69% of votes were unseated. This means that 69% of voters in this constituency voted for a different party than the NLD. Since the party who represents only 31% of the voters became the representative of the whole constituency, this is unfair for the other 69% of the voters and might increase tensions among the parties which represent different groups in parliament.

**Table 3. Percentage of votes for the winning party and the unseated parties across nine townships in Shan State (state level)**

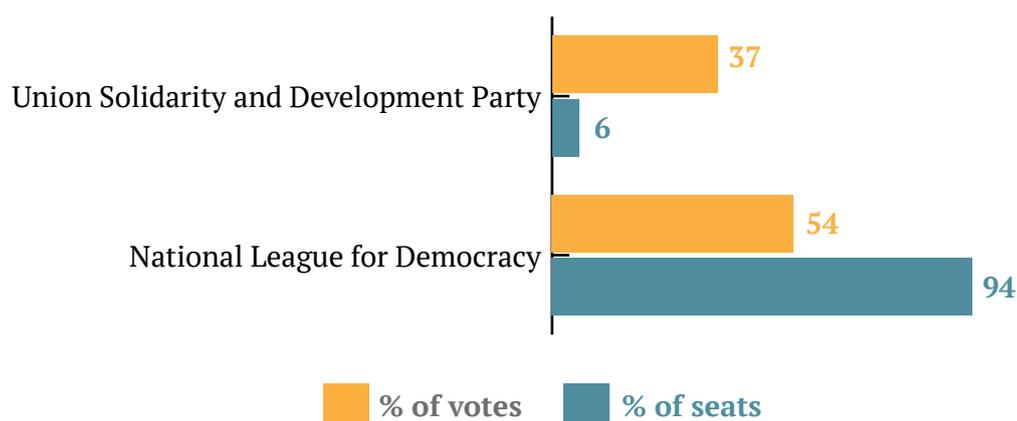
Township	Constituency	Winning party	Winning party: % of votes	Unseated parties: % of votes
Kutkai	Constituency 1	Ta'ang National Party	39%	61%
	Constituency 2	Union Solidarity and Development Party	56%	44%
Kengtung	Constituency 1	Union Solidarity and Development Party	34%	66%
	Constituency 2	Union Solidarity and Development Party	41%	59%
Mongyang	Constituency 1	Union Solidarity and Development Party	47%	53%
	Constituency 2	Union Solidarity and Development Party	57%	43%
Lashio	Constituency 1	National League for Democracy	31%	69%
	Constituency 2	Union Solidarity and Development Party	36%	64%
Hsipaw	Constituency 1	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy	58%	42%
	Constituency 2	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy	73%	27%
Tachileik	Constituency 1	National League for Democracy	56%	44%
	Constituency 2	National League for Democracy	42%	58%
Taunggyi	Constituency 1	Union Solidarity and Development Party	42%	58%
	Constituency 2	Union Solidarity and Development Party	51%	49%
Nansang	Constituency 1	Union Solidarity and Development Party	45%	55%
	Constituency 2	Shan Nationalities League for Democracy	44%	56%
Mongpan	Constituency 1	Shan Nationalities Democratic Party	44%	56%
	Constituency 2	Union Solidarity and Development Party	41%	59%

### 5.3. Ayeyarwady Regional Hluttaw

In the Ayeyarwady regional parliament, there are 52 seats to be filled as there are 26 townships in the region. The regional parliament is also made up of 18 appointed military MPs and two ethnic affairs representatives. In total, 16 political parties contested in the region in the 2015 general election. As seen in Figure 5, among these 16 parties, all of the 52 elected seats were won by the two broadly based parties: the NLD and the USDP<sup>4</sup>. This is because both of these parties contested in all 26 districts of the region. More specifically, the NLD received 54% of the total votes and 94% of the seats (49 in number), which is the already-promised feature of the FPTP electoral system – giving seat bonuses to the majority. After the NLD, the USDP received 37% of the total votes, but received only 6% of the seats (3 in number) because of vote-splitting. The remaining 88% of the contesting parties (14 in number) did not win any seats (see Figure 6) and 9% (270,447 in number) of the total votes became wasted. Thus, only 12% of political parties (2 in number) got into parliament which has been highly influenced by the NLD when it comes to legislation.

<sup>4</sup> Military appointees are not included in the overview, since they are not elected by civilians. Similarly, the ministers of ethnic affairs are excluded as well, as they are marginalized in the decision-making process (Wagaru Mon, 2016).

**Figure 5. The 2015 election results: Political parties' votes and seats in the Ayeyarwady Regional Hluttaw**



**Figure 6. The 2015 election results: Overview of seats in the Ayeyarwady Regional Hluttaw**

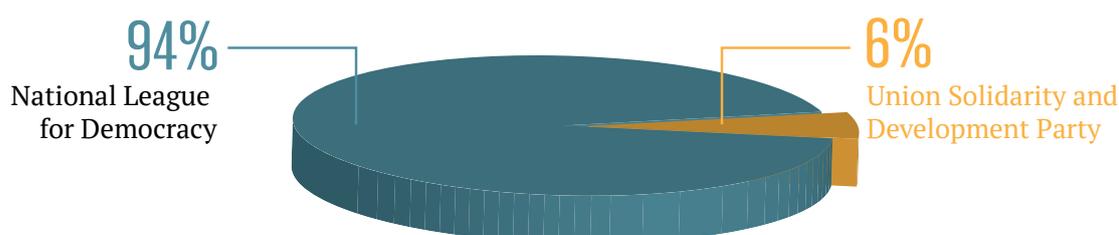


Table 4 shows how the current electoral system discourages fair representation in the Ayeyarwady regional parliament. Among the 26 townships of the Ayeyarwady Region, only five are used as examples, since the rest of the townships face a similar situation. Specifically, in this region, the winner has absolute majority, since the winning party mostly received more than 50% of the total votes in each constituency. Thus, parties that represent the minority have less chance to win seats and consequently, have a voice in parliament.

**Table 4. Percentage of votes for the winning party and the unseated parties across five townships in Ayeyarwady Region (state level)**

Township	Constituency	Winning party	Winning party: % of votes	Unseated parties: % of votes
Myanaung	Constituency 1	National League for Democracy	62%	38%
	Constituency 2	National League for Democracy	64%	36%
Einme	Constituency 1	National League for Democracy	41%	59%
	Constituency 2	National League for Democracy	40%	56%
Zalun	Constituency 1	National League for Democracy	59%	41%

Township	Constituency	Winning party	Winning party: % of votes	Unseated parties: % of votes
	Constituency 2	National League for Democracy	58%	42%
Kyaunggon	Constituency 1	Union Solidarity and Development Party	47%	53%
	Constituency 2	National League for Democracy	48%	52%
Pathein	Constituency 1	National League for Democracy	54%	46%
	Constituency 2	National League for Democracy	60%	40%

On the whole, according to the 2015 election results, the current electoral system is creating both under-representation and over-representation. On the one hand, many small parties received very few seats, even more parties were excluded, and millions of votes became wasted. On the other hand, big parties received seat bonuses and as a result of this, the legislative process at both levels of government became highly controlled by the majority. Moreover, the current electoral system is unfair in terms of demographic representation which can be seen in Table 2, 3, and 4. At the same time, while the results under the FPTP system may not be fair, the system occasionally creates representation for small political parties and its promise of seat bonuses might encourage especially big political parties to be even more competitive than in other electoral systems. Thus, political parties can take advantage of the current electoral system by adopting strategic campaign strategies in the coming 2020 election (Naw Gladys Maung Maung, 2020).

# 6. Scenario Analysis of the 2015 Election Results under Proportional Representation System

In this scenario, seat changes among the contesting parties between the PR and the FPTP systems will be described.

## 6.1. Pyithu Hluttaw

Figure 7 shows how the Lower House would have looked like under the PR system; that is, if the seats had been shared proportionally by the amount of votes each party received. There are obvious changes in the number of seats; for instance, the NLD would have gotten 59% of seats (191 seats in number) instead of 79% (255 seats), as the NLD received 59% of the total votes. Hence, as a result of the switch to the PR system, 64 seats would have been taken away from the NLD. Another change can be found in the case of the USDP. Specifically, Figure 7 shows that, under the PR system, the USDP would have received 29% of the total seats (94 to be exact) instead of 9% (30 seats), which would have strengthened their opposition in parliament. Even though such strengthening is a promise of the FPTP system, this result indicates that it is in fact the PR system that could have encouraged the existence of a strong opposition party in the Pyithu Hluttaw.

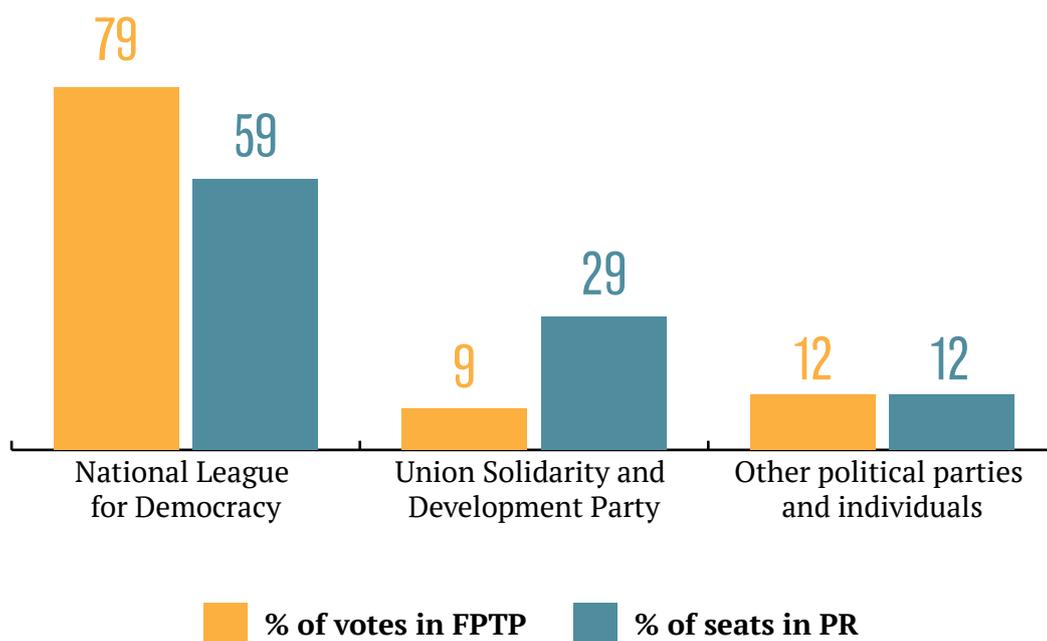
Moreover, according to the promise of the PR, the amount of parties that would have been seated in the Pyithu Hluttaw under this system would have increased to 17.8% from 14.8% (to 14 from 12 in number) under the FPTP system. For example, the National Unity Party with 1.9% of votes which was not seated in 2015 would have been reserved 1.93% of seats (6 in number). At the same time, some winning parties under the FPTP system would have become unseated in the PR scenario, such as the Zomi Congress for Democracy with 0.62% of seats (2 in number) under FPTP and zero under PR. This is because when the seats are shared proportionally by the amount of votes, some parties who do not reach the quota are left out. On the whole, however, the degree of overall party representation would have increased which points to more inclusion of smaller, ethnic, and regionally based parties under the PR system (see Figure 8).

Overall, as more parties representing diverse groups would have gotten seated in the parliament, this would have allowed them to have a voice in the decision-making process. Finally, as more political parties would have been seated under the PR system, fewer votes would have been wasted; only 3% (682,773 in number). Based on this scenario analysis, it can then be argued that fairer representation could be achieved in the next election, if the districts' magnitude (i.e. the number of seats filled by each district) and allocation of seats were designed differently.

**Figure 7. Scenario analysis of the 2015 election results under the PR system: Political parties' seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw**



**Figure 8. Scenario analysis of the 2015 election results under the PR system: Overview of seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw**

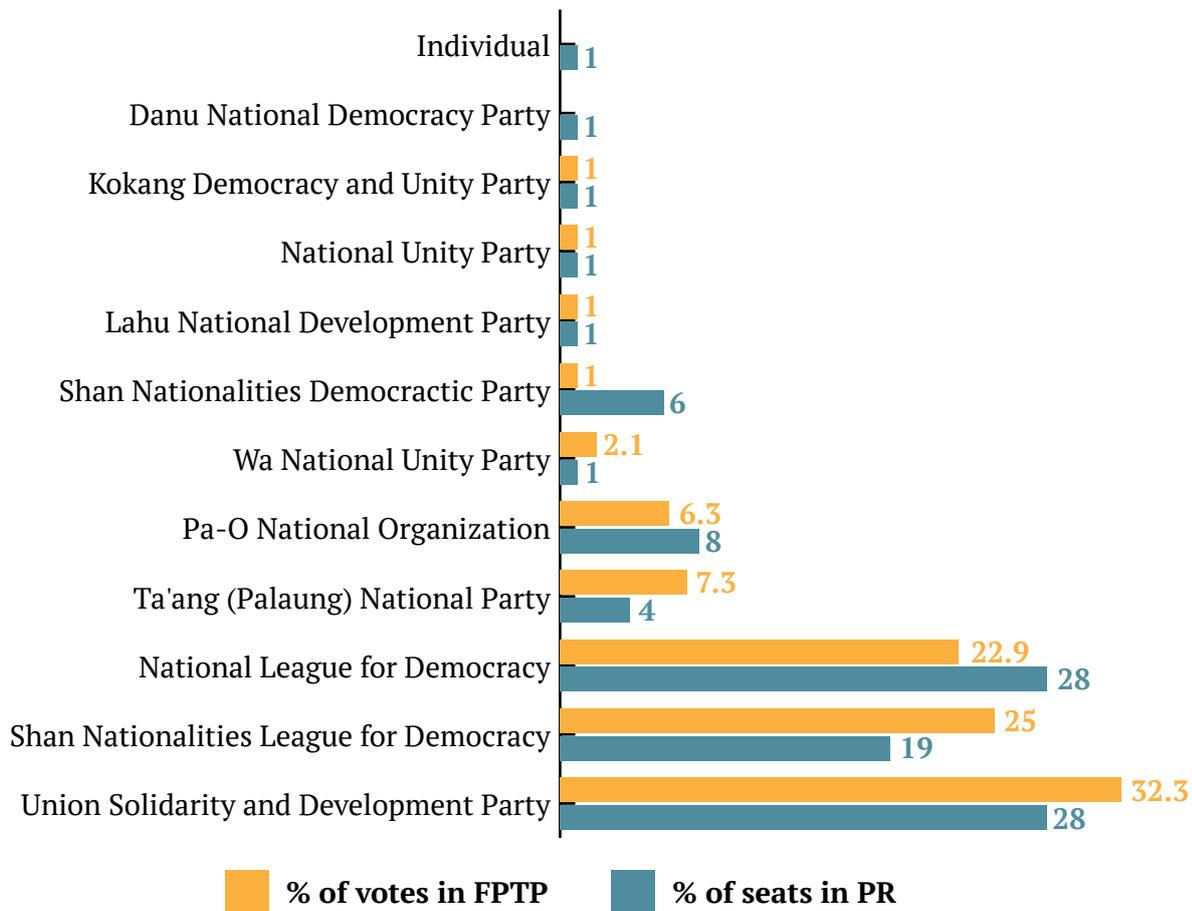


## 6.2. Shan State Hluttaw

In a pure PR electoral system scenario, Shan State would have been drawn as one large district. Figure 9 shows how the Shan State Hluttaw would have looked like after the 2015 election. As the parties would have been filtered out by a hare quota, only 54% of them (14 in number) would have been seated. However, unlike under FPTP, different political parties such as Danu National Democracy Party and individual candidates would have been seated.

When it comes to the NLD, it would have gotten more seats – 28% of seats (27 in number) instead of 22.9% (22 in number) – as the party received the highest amount of votes; namely, 27%. Similarly, the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party would have received 6% of seats (6 in number) under PR instead of 1% (1 in number) under FPTP. On the other hand, the number of the USDP seats would have been reduced from 32% to 28% (from 31 to 27 in number) and of the SNLD seats from 25% to 19% (from 24 to 18 in number). As two different parties would have been seated under the PR system as compared to FPTP, the amount of wasted votes would have also decreased to 3.7% (72,837 in number). Thus, if Shan State had adopted the PR system in 2015, it would have enabled the emergence of a third strong, alternative party; namely, the SNLD (see Figure 10).

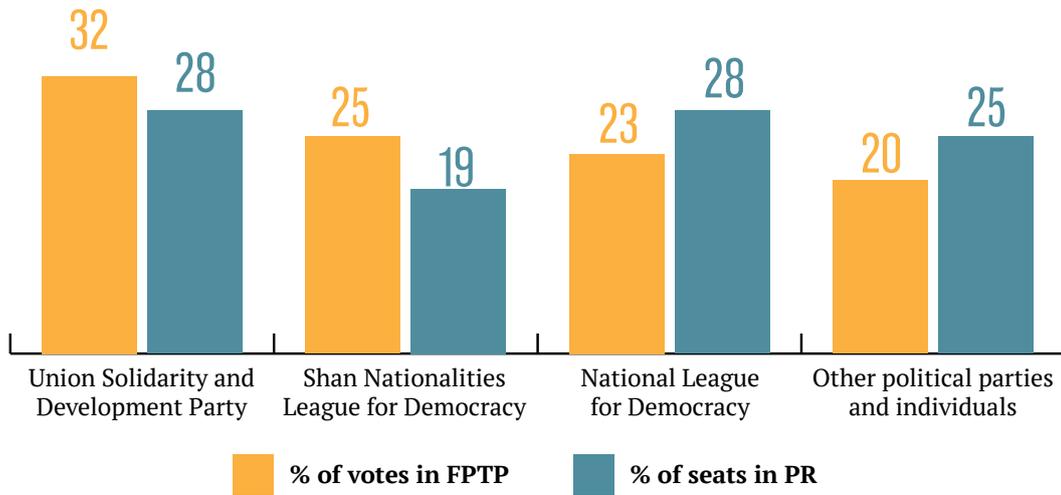
**Figure 9. Scenario analysis of the 2015 election results under the PR system: Political parties' seats in the Shan State Hluttaw**



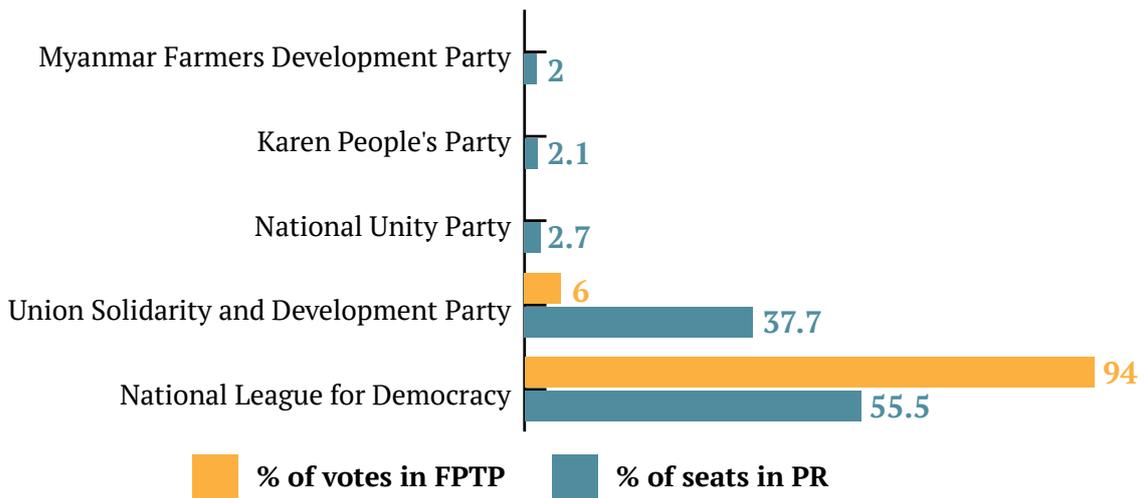
### 6.3. Ayeyarwady Regional Hluttaw

Obvious seat changes would have happened in the Ayeyarwady regional parliament if the PR system had been used in 2015; in fact, the results and their interpretation would have changed drastically. Specifically, the NLD, with 55.5% of the total votes, would have obtained only 55% of seats (29 in number) instead of 94% (49 in number), and the USDP, with 38% of the votes, would have won 38% of the seats (20 in number) instead of 6% (3 in number; see Figure 11). As the seats would have been shared by the amount of votes each party received, the amount of NLD's seats would have significantly changed. Moreover, the PR promises to include small political parties not only in theory, but in this case also in practice, because three more parties would have received a seat each if their votes had been shared proportionally. One of the advantages of the PR system is that, unlike the majoritarian system, there are few wasted votes which in this specific scenario would have been 2% (59,265 in number). Thus, if the PR system had been used in the Ayeyarwady regional parliament in 2015, more political parties would have been seated and the domination by one big party would have been significantly reduced (see Figure 12).

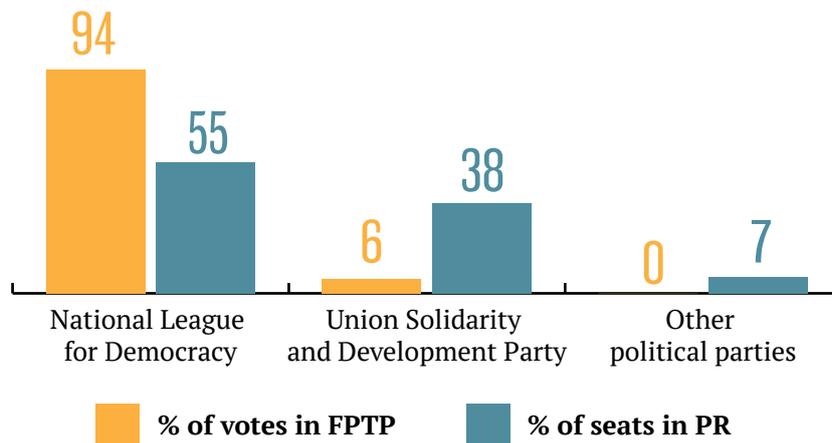
**Figure 10. Scenario analysis of the 2015 election results under the PR system: Overview of seats in the Shan State Hluttaw**



**Figure 11. Scenario analysis of the 2015 election results under the PR system: Political parties' seats in the Ayeyarwady Regional Hluttaw**



**Figure 12. Scenario analysis of the 2015 election results under the PR system: Overview of seats in the Ayeyarwady Regional Hluttaw**





# 7.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to determine the benefits and disadvantages of the current (FPTP) as well as potential (PR) electoral system from the perspective of political parties that contested in the 2015 general election on both national and state/regional level. According to the results, these two electoral systems have distinct impacts on different political parties. The most notable impact is that the PR system brings more political parties into parliaments, which makes them more representative; although many parties are still left out. The second most obvious finding relates to seat changes in parliaments at both levels of government, affecting broadly based national parties as well as smaller, ethnic political parties seated in both electoral systems. Finally, an important impact is evidenced in the amount of wasted votes under each system.

First, compared to FPTP, the degree of representation of small parties increased at both levels of government under the PR system. Specifically, in the Pyithu Hluttaw, the number of seated political parties increased from 14.8% to 17.3% (from 12 to 14 in number); in the Shan State Hluttaw, from 38.4% to 46% (from 10 to 12 in number); and in Ayeyarwady Regional Hluttaw, from 12% to 31% (from 2 to 5 in number). At the same time, although more parties were brought into parliaments, there were still many parties left out; namely, 83% (67 out of 81 in number) on the national level; 54% (16 out of 26 in number) in Shan State; and 69% (11 out of 16 in number) in Ayeyarwady Region. Yet, in comparison with the FPTP system, the PR system still introduced more parties into the three parliaments.

Second, seat changes among the two biggest parties across the electoral systems were obvious, especially in the case of the Pyithu Hluttaw. Here, under the PR system, the NLD seats were reduced from 79% to 59% (from 255 to 191 in number), while the number of USDP seats increased from 9% to 29% (from 30 to 94 in number). This exemplifies that when seats are shared proportionally, opposition parties become strong enough to check and balance the government, which ultimately strengthens democracy. A similarly interesting finding can be seen in the Shan State parliament. Usually, only the USDP is the main rival for the NLD, as they are both broadly based political parties. According to the scenario result, however, if the SNLD merged with other political parties in Shan State, a third big, alternative party could emerge. Likewise, PR also strengthened the opposition in the Ayeyarwady regional parliament, which suggests that overall, the PR system encourages the emergence of strong opposition parties as well as potential alternatives to the two biggest political parties in Myanmar.

Significant seat changes across the two systems happened among smaller, ethnic, and regionally based political parties as well. For example, in the Pyithu Hluttaw, the ANP with 3.7% of seats (12 in number) under the FPTP system became seated again under the PR system with only 2.19% of seats (7 in number), and the SNLD with 3.7% of seats became seated again with only 1.57% of seats (5 in number). In this case, when the seats were shared

proportionally, the numbers of seats for the two parties actually decreased. In contrast, the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party, which received 6% of the total votes in Shan State and 1% of seats (1 in number) in 2015, would have received 6.3% (6 seats) under the PR system. Finally, in the case of the Ayeyarwady regional parliament, no ethnic political parties were in fact seated in 2015, while they would have occupied 7% of seats combined under the PR system. The take away here is that the PR system presented in our scenario changed the number of seats assigned to ethnic and regionally based political parties in various ways, though ultimately, it increased their overall representation in parliament.

Finally, under the current electoral system, many more votes were wasted than under the imagined PR system, because some parties received fewer seats than was their actual public support in 2015. For instance, in the Pyithu Hluttaw, the number of wasted votes under FPTP was almost three times higher than under PR (8.12% versus 3%). Similarly, in Shan State, there were 4% of wasted votes in the PR scenario, while 6.3% of votes were wasted under the current electoral system in 2015. The most obvious example though is Ayeyarwady Region, as the number of wasted votes in FPTP was four times higher than in PR (9% versus 2%). Thus, these findings clearly reflect the promise of the PR system, namely, wasting fewer votes.

Based on the results of the current study, it is then possible to evaluate the theoretical promises of the two electoral systems in the context of Myanmar. Table 5 below provides an overview of specific features of the FPTP and PR systems in theory (as described in Reynolds et al., 2008 and Williams, 2005) as well as their fulfillment (or lack thereof) in Myanmar.

**Table 5. Selected theoretical features of the two electoral systems and the 2015 election results**

Electoral system	Theoretical feature	Confirmed in practice?	Example
FPTP	Gives rise to single-party governments with seat bonuses and advantages broadly based parties (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 28)		The winning party (the NLD) with 59% of the total votes occupies 79% of the Pyithu Hluttaw seats
FPTP	Encourages the emergence of strong opposition parties (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 28)	X	An opposition party (the USDP) with 28% of the total votes is seated with only 9% of seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw
FPTP	Advantages groups that are geographically concentrated (Reynolds et al., 2008)		Ta'ang National Party receives 1% of seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw and 7.3% of in Shan State Hluttaw, as the Ta'ang are geographically concentrated
FPTP	Excludes minorities/small parties from fair representation (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 29)		Unfair demographic representation of some groups, as shown in Table 2 and 3
PR: List PR	“Reduces the disparity between a party’s share of the national votes and its share of the parliamentary seats”(Reynolds et al., 2008, p.29)		The big gap in receiving seats between the NLD and the USDP is reduced; for example, the USDP would have received 29% of seats (94 in number) in PR instead of 9% of seats (30 in number) in FPTP in the Pyithu Hluttaw

Electoral system	Theoretical feature	Confirmed in practice?	Example
PR: List PR	Facilitates minority parties' access to representation (Reynolds et al., 2008)		Regional political parties with even very small electoral support (yet still above the quota) gain representation in the legislature, such as the Danu National Democracy Party, which was not seated in FPTP
PR: List PR	Gives political space to parties that represent multi-ethnic populations (Reynolds et al., 2008)		Brings smaller parties representing diverse groups into all three parliaments; for example, in the Ayeyarwady Regional Hluttaw, Karen People's Party, National Unity Party and Myanmar Farmers Development Party are seated only under the PR
PR: List PR	Gives rise to very few wasted votes (Reynolds et al., 2008, p. 62)		Fewer votes are wasted at both union and state/regional level as mentioned in the scenario analysis

Overall, almost all of the findings of the current study reflect the theoretical features of the two electoral systems – apart from FPTP's promise of the emergence of strong opposition parties. When it comes to the PR system though, this fulfills all of the given promises. On the whole, this means that, for the first, the theoretical features of these electoral systems are relevant to the current context of Myanmar, and, for the second, that different political parties are favored differently by the two electoral systems under given promises. Here, it is important to note that each of these systems has been created for specific purposes and has distinct benefits and weaknesses. The best electoral system is the one that fits each specific country's needs.

To sum up, the goal of this paper was to describe how the FPTP and PR electoral systems result in different levels of representation in parliament and to demonstrate, through a scenario analysis, changes that could happen if Myanmar adopted the PR system. The common feature of the two electoral systems in the current context of Myanmar is that the minority receives fewer seats and the majority receives many more seats, and this is for many reasons, such as the popularity of the broadly based political parties in the country. Moreover, the current FPTP electoral system also advantages these parties, together with a selected few smaller, regionally based parties.

According to the demographics of Myanmar, the majority of the population is Bamar (68%) and the rest (32%) consists of diverse ethnic groups. Generally, the two national broadly based parties represent the majority Bamar and the other political parties and individuals represent the other, diverse groups in Myanmar. If we look at the political parties' percentage of seats in parliament through a demographic lens, it is not fair for the 32% of the population, since their representation in the Pyithu Hluttaw is only at 12% under both electoral systems, which could increase tensions between parties representing the majority and the minorities. Thus, the country will have to consider a platform which encourages representation of both majority and minority groups.

In relation to this, the analysis has indeed shown that it is highly challenging for smaller, ethnic, and regionally based political parties to win more seats in both electoral systems, because the gap in receiving votes among the different political parties is rather big. For example, most of these political parties received a number of votes which would have been under the quota and would thus have been left out of parliament even under the PR system. This means that if a country sets the quota too high, it could still be difficult for smaller

parties to reach it and the parliament would still be filled by big, majority parties. As a result, big parties would dominate the parliament even in the PR system if there was a big gap in receiving votes among the various parties.

All in all, the advantage of the PR system is that it brings changes to parliament through sharing seats in a fair way and it also brings more political parties in. By enabling more representation of diverse groups, the system also reduces disparities in demographic representation. Most importantly for a country on a transition to democracy, the PR system encourages the emergence of strong opposition parties, at least according to the recalculation of the 2015 election results. Yet, simply adopting the PR system is not enough to guarantee full representation, since it is not the only answer through which to increase the percentage of parliament seats allocated to diverse groups. Overall, gaining more representation in the future depends on the country's political willingness to adopt a new electoral system or to provide positive affirmations, such as reserving a certain quota of seats for smaller parties. More representation in parliament is a step towards inclusion, which has several advantages in a diverse society. Myanmar should adopt an electoral system which could bring about more and fairer representation, since this would strengthen democracy in the country, which is crucial to building a federal democratic Union.

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