

A Study of the Apparent and Hidden Functions of Elections

Touazi Khaled

khaled.touazi@univ-msila.dz

Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, University of M'sila, Algeria



<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-0824-2723>

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Abstract:

This paper seeks to provide an analysis of elections as a socio-political phenomenon that goes beyond their function as a mechanism of political representation. It explores their role as either a tool for political change or a hindrance to democratic transition, considering the tools at the disposal of the administration or authority in managing political and electoral affairs. The paper also examines the objectives pursued through elections, whether in service of democratization or as an adaptation to democratic transition, aligned with the interests and privileges inherited from past practices. The study concludes with a central point: elections are inherently a transformative phenomenon, regardless of the political framework in which they are conducted or the outcomes they produce.

Keywords: Free and fair elections; Democracy; Electoral administration; Electoral system.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Elections are considered among the mechanisms upon which the democratic system relies, Democracy is the fertile environment in which free and fair elections mature, allowing the popular will to be expressed through political participation, which is considered the expressive field through which the people achieve full citizenship. Here, the complex phrase "free and fair elections" raises questions about the electoral process and the neutrality of the administration overseeing and managing this process from the beginning to the announcement of election results. This situation actually reflects a crisis of democracy in the underdeveloped world, where vestiges of authoritarianism and practices of the totalitarian period are still strongly present in people's minds and in practice.

Discussing elections is not limited to democratic systems only, because elections are a means used to legitimize authoritarian regimes or those regimes in the early stages of the democratic transition process. This raises again the issue of free and fair elections, which are the key factor in classifying the political system. Transitioning systems and societies have experienced decades of declared democracy, during which there were periodic and relatively regular electoral processes that showed a contrast between what is acknowledged as rights and freedoms stipulated in democratic constitutions, and what is considered a restriction and falls within the practices of non-democratic regimes. This creates a real dilemma concerning the crossing of the threshold from hybrid democratic systems to actual democratic systems. Therefore, how can elections be an expressive means to achieve democratic consolidation? And how can electoral practice transition from the mobilizing function desired by the regime to the essential function entrusted to it?

Based on the problem statement, we will try to formulate the following hypotheses:

- The better the electoral system, the more pronounced its transformative function.

- The more fair and transparent the electoral system is, the greater its ability to bring about political and social changes that reflect the will of the voters.
- Elections transcend their symbolic dimension granted by democracy to become a formal means when authoritarianism is strongly present.
- Elections contribute to the process of democratic consolidation when the electoral administration is independent.

Starting from the above problem statement and hypotheses, we will use the historical and comparative approach to address the topic of elections, which is a fundamental axis in the structure of the political system in any country. This paper addresses the topic of elections and its relationship with democracy and the process of democratic consolidation in general. The electoral mechanism as an expressive means has various dimensions, and the role of administration in shaping the features of the democratic system through elections and electoral systems, dividing electoral districts, reflecting on political parties and opposition within the political process imposed by the democratic system and the electoral system, as well as issues of boycott, electoral turnout, and the electorate.

2.Elections and Democracy

The relationship between democracy and elections has its roots in the ancient political practices of societies. The participation of citizens in political life was linked to democracy, established by the Greeks in the 5th century BC in the city-state of Athens¹, through involving citizens in making decisions related to public affairs. This participation evolved over the ages to become dependent on the nature of the political system and the development of the concept of citizenship within democratic political systems that seek to make elections a means of political advancement and a system of choice. This situation always required the presence of institutions that enable citizens to exercise their right to vote.

2.1. Elections and Their Relationship to Political Representation

Historically, the outlines of electoral practices emerged at the end of the eleventh century within the Italian republics, where the consul system was replaced by the governing councils system, led by an official known as

the *podestà*². This position was allocated through restricted voting, limited to the male element of the royal families subject to fees and permanently settled in the city. The position was also limited in time and the holder was accountable to the "citizens" of the republics. This new situation in medieval Europe was a revival of the democracy of the city-state of Athens and the democracy of the Roman Republic. However, it had its particularities of the period, where we note that the elections were no longer limited to citizens as embodied in Athens and Rome, but became restricted to belonging to the upper class in society, then expanded to include lower classes and newly wealthy. This situation continued until the nineteenth century with the political and social transformations brought about by the popular revolutions in Europe and America, which allowed the inclusion of new classes in political life. This shift was actually represented by the emerging and nascent forces due to the industrial revolution in nineteenth-century Europe, followed by the struggle of labor movements and then some associations linked to the rights of some segments of society.

Elections are considered a unique invention as they are a direct result of human association and the technology that humans have sought to resolve individual and collective conflicts arising from conflicting interests, ideas, and goals. At the same time, it is an expression of societal awareness of the need to make concessions for the benefit of the human group. The developments that affected political authority over the ages and then the democratic system have moved society from a world dominated by chaos and inequality to a more organized world in harmony with the differences that society experiences. Elections have given citizens the ability to express, determine, and change after a series of discussions related to political life. Voting makes the citizen an active participant in decision-making on a regular and systematic basis. However, at the same time, elections legitimize the ruling authority, whatever its form, and thus give it the ability to continue. The democratic evolution has led to the emergence of fundamental actors in political life who participate regularly in political life and have the ability to influence the functioning of the political system.

The world today is characterized by a kind of ambiguity regarding the democratic model that should be adopted, even in the most democratic societies. This is because the world is currently experiencing a period of uncertainty, in line with the technological revolution and the emergence of social media as expressive spaces, and pressure groups that threaten the stability of political systems. Reality has changed, demands have also changed, and so have the methods of expression. There is talk of electronic voting, which some see as a way to combat voter apathy. There is also a call to adapt to the demands of youth through the internet. However, despite all this, periodic and regular elections remain the official expressive space for choice and active participation in the political process.

In light of this, we can discuss the nature of elections as a political act: is it a right or a duty? Viewing elections as a right or a duty varies from country to country and depends on the political system and the laws of each country. Some countries consider voting a right of citizens, meaning they have the freedom to participate in the electoral process or not, according to their personal choices. Other countries consider voting a legal obligation for citizens, meaning that citizens must participate in elections and cast their votes, or else face penalties. In this case, elections go beyond their expressive function to become a mobilization tool for the existing system. It is worth noting that there is also an ethical perspective that considers voting a social duty, where participation in the electoral process is a duty for citizens to contribute to shaping political and democratic decisions and choosing leaders and policies that represent their common interests. This view is close to a utopian perspective, as it transforms the act of voting from a periodic technique used by citizens to express their opinion into an act that changes political and social life.

2.2 Are there agreed-upon standards for free and fair elections?

From the perspective of political and social sciences, or even law, it is not possible to talk about precise standards for judging the fairness and freedom of elections or the electoral process. However, there are indicators that can be referred to when discussing elections that approach fairness and freedom. Therefore, when talking about elections, we cannot take them in

isolation from democracy, as the relationship between them can be symbiotic, especially if we consider that some define democracy as a set of procedures and institutions through which individuals can participate in the decision-making process, by competing in free and fair elections. This is most evident in the writings of Robert Dahl in his book "On Democracy," where he makes elections one of the basic conditions for realizing democracy, emphasizing that the right to protest and political participation are key elements of democracy³.

The value of elections is determined by the extent to which they embody or reflect democracy, and by society's acknowledgment that they are the main determinant and the sole supervisory mechanism for the performance of authority, even if this is done periodically. The value of elections is also evident in the acknowledgment that they remain an open space for effective and peaceful competition among the various political forces that make up the political field.

Therefore, elections derive their value from their relationship with actual democracy. They are nothing more than the stereotypical image of the political decision-making process in the state and society. They derive their strength and standards from a set of international and regional charters that take democratic principles as the basis of their general structure. This is clearly evident in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁴ and its Article 21, which makes elections one of the fundamental principles of democracy and a basic foundation for participation in choice, nomination, or access to power. The same declaration also refers to a set of rights related to the electoral process, such as freedom of opinion, expression, association, and the establishment of parties.

Among other charters, we also find the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, and its Article 25 which explicitly states that every citizen, without any discrimination, has the right to participate in the management of public affairs directly or through freely chosen representatives. It also grants the right to stand for elections or to choose representatives in fair elections held periodically and by universal suffrage.

These charters have in practice provided a fertile ground for the emergence of a set of fundamental principles related to elections, which can be considered international standards for free and fair elections, namely⁵:

- Elections must be conducted according to the law.
- Elections must be conducted in a transparent manner and be accountable.
- Competition must be fair and ensure equal access to public resources.
- The electorate must be informed about the elections and their electoral rights.
- Independent oversight of elections must be ensured.

Despite the agreement on the existence of a set of general standards to ensure free and fair elections, a number of technical aspects are added to them after the start of the electoral process, mainly related to each country, such as the type of ballot box and the nature of the ballot papers, the adopted representation system, the programs used to manage the electoral process, the data, devices, and means used to count the votes. However, we cannot assert the existence of a magic formula that leads to the integrity of elections even in the most advanced countries.

3. Elections as an Expressive Space

Elections are considered the expressive space through which citizens can freely express their opinions on a regular basis. The characteristics of this expressive space are manifested in a set of mechanisms that must be provided, especially those related to the electoral process or those that allow citizens to choose their representatives in various electoral bodies. When we talk about an expressive space, we are talking about the freedom of expression as a human right. In the case of elections, we are talking about the freedom of the voter to express their opinion and political affiliation freely and without interference from any party, through mechanisms associated with democracy such as free media and political parties⁶.

This legally and sometimes internationally recognized expressive space can clash with some legal restrictions related to national security, for example, or public order, or the protection of ethnic groups in society. These restrictions may be a reason or pretext for closing this space or limiting it

through administrative intervention in shaping the electoral system or dividing electoral districts.

The expressive space can take various forms primarily related to the electoral process. The first of these expressive areas is electoral participation, the second is boycott, and the third is protest.

3.1. Electoral Participation

Electoral participation is considered one of the forms of expression primarily linked to political participation, which reflects successful popular efforts aimed at choosing government leadership or influencing government decisions. Political participation, in general, is linked to elections and voting. Electoral participation is considered the highest form of political participation as it is the most stable means of changing policies and decisions adopted by governments.

Voting can take various forms depending on the political upbringing of the voter. It can be purely political, as per democratic theory, considering elections as an expressive force, either through actual participation by choosing among a group of options based on the political orientations the voter believes in, or by considering elections as non-political but necessary, and therefore, they prefer to go to the polls to express their electoral right with a blank or protest vote. They do not find an alternative among the available choices that allows them to change the situation. Thus, the invalidated vote by a blank or protest vote becomes an expressive means and a way to assert existence for a voter who believes that voting is both a right and a duty.

3.2 Boycott or Electoral Abstention

Abstention is considered one form of electoral expression. Not going to the polls on the designated election day is, in practice, a form of democratic expression. Boycott is one form of expression where individuals freely choose not to participate in the electoral process due to political circumstances related to the country's general situation, or due to a lack of conviction in the need for change, or a belief that elections are not a means of political change. Abstention is also related to political upbringing,

especially when it comes to certain political groups that may consider the electoral process as a farce and unproductive.

This type of group often encourages its members not to go to the polls as an expressive means against the administration, its policies, and the government. For them, rejecting political representation reflects the fundamental principles upon which these groups, organized in a direction called anarchism, reject the institutions upon which the state and system are based. Within these groups, non-participation in elections is seen as behaviour of great value and a means to reconsider social and political organization. Therefore, it opens the door to another form of expression, which is protest, considered one of the forms of electoral expression.

3.3 Protest

Protest is considered a form of expression used by society in general against policies or general trends adopted by the government. This is mainly manifested in highlighting the government's policies when it is moving in a direction that does not align with the public interest of the nation. This protest begins by mobilizing the media, social movements, political parties, and parliamentary committees.

This protest, which may be led by various parties including the opposition, seeks to contribute in some way to compel the government to reconsider its decisions and to make decisions that are more rational and fair. Protest plays an important role in directing public opinion and shaping an electoral orientation, which can create a majority vote or lead to boycotts. Protest is known as a form of public grievance and expression of rejection, either through actions or words. Protest usually takes on a collective nature, where protesters aim to publicly express their stance on a particular issue or position. Protest is closely related to elections in many advanced countries, where the electoral act can be a criterion and a means of popular mobilization. This is particularly evident in referendums, where the voter expresses their rejection of a specific policy the government seeks to impose. In this case, protest is considered a healthy phenomenon because it is an expressive form through which voters can change the political trends of the government.

4. Elections and Determinants of Electoral Behavior

The discussion about elections leads us to talk about the determinants of electoral behavior. In this context, we must ask: What are the most important determinants of electoral behavior? The answer to this question varies depending on different opinions on the subject. Some link electoral behavior to the economic utilitarian aspect, meaning that voters make decisions based on their personal and economic interests. They believe that voters base their vote on their expectations regarding the impact of candidates' policies on their personal economy and prosperity. On the other hand, others argue that voters' orientations are shaped by social and cultural pressures. They are also a reflection of the influence of voters' decisions on values and beliefs deeply rooted in their social imagination and surroundings. Others believe that voters tend to examine the capabilities, potential, and experiences of the candidates and their ability to fulfill their electoral promises. Another perspective suggests that voters tend to follow established electoral patterns over time, such as party affiliation or national belonging. This means that voters follow previous practices in making their decisions. These are some determinants of electoral behavior, and there are many other factors that can address issues such as race, religion, gender, social class, and others as factors that influence voters' choices. It remains to be said that electoral behavior is complex and diverse, influenced by different factors in different contexts. It is primarily linked to the social and political structure of each country. Electoral behavior is an important factor in determining election outcomes, as it is influenced by several factors, including political beliefs, values, personal interests, social orientations, and understanding these factors can help predict voter voting patterns and election results. Through the study of electoral behavior, it is possible to identify a set of factors influencing the course of elections, such as:

4.1 Partisan Affiliation: Partisan affiliation is one of the most important factors influencing voter behavior. Voters are likely to vote for candidates who belong to or are supported by the party they feel affiliated with. The

Republican and Democratic parties in the United States are prime examples of this.

4.2 Values and Beliefs: Voters are influenced by the political values and beliefs they hold. They may vote based on issues that are important to them and align with their political beliefs. This is particularly evident in Eastern Europe, where religious parties dominate.

4.3 Economic Performance: The economic situation can influence voter behavior. When the economy is strong and individuals feel prosperous, they may lean towards supporting the current rulers or candidates who promise to maintain economic stability. Conversely, when the economy is weak or facing challenges, there may be a voter trend towards change.

4.4 Media: The media can significantly influence voter behavior by directing information and shaping opinions. Voters rely on the media to obtain information about candidates and political issues. Media coverage and electoral propaganda can influence the final decisions of voters, especially those who do not have prior political orientations or are not engaged in political activities.

These are some of the factors that influence voter behavior, and their impact depends on the political, social, and economic context of each country and society. It should be noted that these factors are not fixed rules, and voters may be influenced by other individual and unique factors when making their electoral decisions.

5. Electoral Management and its Impact on Electoral Behavior

Elections are symbolic in society, seen by the majority as a means or tool for change, especially in countries where democracy is established and has surpassed the transition phase. Many may view elections as a simple process, where various factors intersect to achieve political representation for different segments of society. However, the truth is that the electoral process is more complex than it may seem to some, and it may even fall under what is known as political engineering or electoral engineering. This can be defined as a method to bring about changes in the electoral system, government, and even the party system, with the aim of increasing or diminishing electoral participation.

In this context, a number of actors are active in overseeing this process, especially the electoral administration. The latter is a result of the evolution of voting first, then political participation, and the system of representation, which has become diverse with the development and spread of democracy in various regions of the world. Discussing electoral administration leads us to talk about the institutions or bodies authorized by law to manage the electoral process from its beginning to the announcement of the final results. The entity responsible for this process varies from one country to another. Some prefer to entrust this task to a single body overseeing the entire process, while others see the need to distribute administrative tasks among a group of bodies under the supervision of a higher authority.

Theoretically, the electoral administration is assigned a number of tasks, starting from registering voters in the electoral rolls to accompanying and supervising the voting process, then counting the votes and announcing the election results. This administration can also establish a supervisory body under its authority or as an independent entity. Furthermore, the electoral administration may be entrusted with the task of delimiting and dividing electoral districts. As mentioned earlier, the electoral administration varies from one country to another, depending on the nature of the system and the general orientations in each country. Based on this, three types of electoral administration can be distinguished: governmental, independent, and mixed⁷.

5.1 Governmental Electoral Administration

This form of electoral administration is found in countries where governments oversee the organization and regulation of the electoral process. This is usually done under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior, which may appoint the minister to carry out this task or appoint a ministry official to oversee the work of the body through a number of administration members affiliated with the ministry. This administration is allocated a budget that falls within the financial framework of the ministry.

5.2 Independent Electoral Administration

This entity differs from governmental administration as it enjoys independence from authority and financial independence as well. This dual

independence makes this body not subordinate to any entity and not accountable to any ministry or governmental body. However, sometimes it may be accountable to the legislative body, the judiciary, or even the head of state. During their tenure, its members are required to be independent of any government agency.

5.3 Mixed Electoral Administration

This form of administration is a mixture of independent and governmental administration. The independent administration supervises the elections and their conduct, while another parallel administration, affiliated with the government, organizes the elections.

Regardless of the type of electoral administration, it is required to adhere to a set of fundamental principles in managing the electoral process, such as independence, neutrality, integrity, transparency, and efficiency. This is to achieve the most appropriate representation and draw a party map representing the majority of social groups in the country. This situation does not arise without providing a fair environment where various political spectra interact, an environment we can call a competitive field where neither the authorities nor other parties intervene. This allows the electoral administration to be the real and true guarantor of the voters' voices and the true representation of parties or candidates.

Talking about neutrality and integrity as fundamental principles in electoral administration leads us to point out the obstacles that may prevent the electoral administration from achieving its assigned goals legally and constitutionally. In this context, we can mention a set of obstacles:

5.4 The Impact of Corruption in Politics and Elections

Corruption is evident in the initial nominations on electoral lists, where experienced activists in parties are often excluded in favor of candidates who pay the party to be included on the list, sometimes even at the top. This interference continues during the electoral campaign through the buying of votes by offering money and gifts to residents of the electoral district in order to win a seat in one of the elected bodies⁸.

5.5 Government Intervention in Elections

Intervention takes many forms, either through the administrative apparatus, which employs its capabilities to varying degrees and through various means to support a candidate at the expense of another candidate or political party at the expense of other political parties. Among these means are the audiovisual media, which can become a platform for serving one candidate at the expense of others.

5.6 Intervention through Fraud

Fraud usually begins before the voting process begins by manipulating voter registers, either by adding new voters in several districts or polling stations and providing them with multiple voter cards, or by striking off others from these electoral lists and excluding them from participation in a legal manner, so to speak. Fraud can also take other forms, such as repeated voting or stuffing ballot boxes before counting, or changing ballot boxes with others already filled with votes in favor of a party or candidate.

Interference in the electoral process is considered one of the biggest threats to political life, especially in countries new to democracy. It contributes in various ways to the reproduction of power by inhibiting the democratic transition and political change. It also creates a crisis of trust between the ruler and the ruled, or rather, between the voter and the administration, resulting in a disenchantment with political life, the electoral process, and political participation.

Intervention or non-intervention in the electoral process is a crucial factor in conferring legitimacy and legality on elections in general, or on the outcomes of elections in particular. As we have seen above, there is the possibility of intervention in all stages of the electoral process. This intervention has repercussions on political life. This dilemma in reality prompts us to raise a number of questions, including how can the electoral system be an obstacle to the consolidation of democracy? And what role does the drawing or carving of electoral districts play in the process of democratic construction?

6. The electoral system is essential to driving change and fostering democratic development

Consolidation. It is one of the pillars that determine representation on one hand and the path of voter choices on the other. The electoral system can be defined as the set of rules that govern the electoral process by translating the choices of voters into political choices. This definition encapsulates the electoral system in a set of rules and techniques, which diminishes its role as part of a larger process influenced by a variety of factors. Elections are not merely procedures; they involve behaviors, attitudes, and interactions with the external and internal environment. However, the electoral system remains one of the most important factors influencing the overall pattern of a state or political system, in the peaceful transfer of power, and in the legitimization of political authority, as well as in shaping and developing the party system.

Discussing the electoral system in democratic systems reflects a framework that starts from the constitutional system and continues into the legislative field. It is not possible to claim the existence of a single electoral system that can be relied upon and exported to other countries, because electoral systems are based on socio-economic and political contexts that stem from the cultural structure of society. However, generally speaking, the electoral system is supposed to guarantee civil and political freedoms for citizens. It is an attempt to include various social groups that make up the electorate within the electoral system by granting them the ability to change and express their political opinions explicitly or implicitly in various electoral events.

6.1. The Role of the Electoral System in Promoting Democratic Transformation and Consolidation

The electoral system is one of the pillars that determine representation on one hand, and it defines the path of voters' choices on the other. The electoral system can be defined as the set of rules that govern the electoral process by translating the choices of voters into political choices. This definition simplifies the electoral system into a set of rules and techniques, which, in reality, downplays the role of the electoral system, as it is part of a

larger process influenced by various factors. Elections are not just a procedure; they are also behaviors, attitudes, and interactions with the external and internal environment. However, the electoral system remains one of the most influential factors in the overall pattern of the state or political system, in the peaceful transfer of power, and in legitimizing political authority. It also affects the party system and its form and evolution.

Talking about the electoral system in democratic systems reflects a structure that starts from the constitutional system and continues to the legislative field. It cannot be asserted that there is a single electoral system that can be relied upon and exported to other countries, as electoral systems are based on socio-economic and political contexts, stemming from the cultural structure of society. However, in general, the electoral system is supposed to guarantee civil and political liberties to citizens. Thus, it attempts to include various social categories that make up the electorate within the electoral system, by giving them the ability to change and express their political opinions explicitly or implicitly in various electoral events.

Given the importance of the electoral system, it must be based on a set of rules that contribute to consolidating the electoral system and creating cohesion in the social structure. Consequently, it was necessary to take into account a set of criteria in preparing the electoral system, including:

- Providing incentives for consensus and reconciliation.
- Opening the door to everyone to participate in elections and contributing to the continuity of regular elections.
- Contributing to the existence of a stable and effective government subject to accountability and oversight.
- Creating a legislative opposition.
- Encouraging strong and effective political parties while achieving national representation, including women and regional minorities.

Taking these theoretical criteria into account in designing the electoral system cannot hide from us a reality that many overlook, which is that the process of building or engineering an electoral system is essentially based on predetermined goals that are intended to be achieved through the electoral

system. For this purpose, a set of techniques and rules related to the design of electoral systems is relied upon. Among these variables are electoral system families, the size of electoral districts, the roles granted to political parties, ballot papers, as well as other issues related to the system of quotas and the representation of minorities⁹. Electoral systems are diverse, but they can be categorized into three main families: the plurality/majority systems, the proportional representation system, and the mixed systems. Branching from these three families are five dominant electoral systems that govern political life and electoral practice. These include the first-past-the-post system and the two-round system, which fall under the plurality/majority family. Additionally, there is the proportional representation list system, which belongs to the proportional representation family. We also find the mixed-member proportional system and the parallel system, both of which fall under the mixed systems family.

This diversity and variation in the choice of electoral system are fundamentally linked to the objectives that are intended to be achieved. As mentioned earlier, the electoral system may contribute to reshaping the party map and to drawing the outlines of a new political system. For example, the first-past-the-post system may enhance political participation, while the proportional representation system may contribute to strong support for the presidential institution within the parliament. Therefore, the electoral system plays a fundamental role in the structure of the political system and in consolidating democracy or curbing it through the general orientations dictated by the system or the administration during the preparation of the electoral system. For instance, the quota system may be unfair when it imposes mandatory representation for certain social groups at the expense of others to achieve a kind of equality. Similarly, the electoral system may establish a dominant party system, through which other parties are marginalized, gradually leading them to disappear or practice the role of ceremonial parties.

6.2. Manipulation of electoral districts

From this brief overview of the electoral system, it can be said that the electoral system is a means of managing conflicts within society. Some

systems seek to use electoral systems to control opposition and the party system¹⁰, favoring one party over others. Some scholars of party affairs believe that dividing and manipulating electoral districts greatly contributes to shaping a non-representative parliamentary system. Therefore, the electoral system is supposed to be fair. Administrative division in competitive democratic systems is a means of giving various candidates equal chances of winning. Thus, dividing electoral districts is a fundamental factor in guiding elections and influencing the electoral process as a right granted to citizens in democratic systems.

Therefore, it can be said that in such cases, elections transform from the stereotypical image that makes them a means of change to an expressive image with no echo in political life. Consequently, they establish a political reality that is sometimes expressed violently and sometimes with a kind of indifference. Electoral division must consider a set of criteria, including population equality, by ensuring proportional equality between districts, especially regarding population disparities between districts that may lead to wasting the relative difference in votes¹¹. This contradicts the principles of representative democracy, which require that everyone be represented in the legislative body equally in each electoral district. Electoral division must also consider the representative nature. It should take into account the unity of interests that the population shares, and thus, combining two districts to share the same interests will complicate the task of the representative.

7. CONCLUSION

Democracy, in its representative form, is one of the political practices that has emerged since ancient times, in line with the evolution of the concept of popular sovereignty, which democracy has long advocated for. Representation in politics has been embodied through political participation based on electoral mechanisms. Through our study of the topic of elections, we have noticed that elections take on various expressive forms, far from political exploitation. They are linked to the political commitment of all segments of society, believing that elections are the only space that allows citizens to achieve their political choices, whether through active

participation, formal participation, abstention, or protest. This expressive image is guaranteed by the constitution and regulated by the law through electoral laws and systems.

This electoral structure or engineering significantly contributes to establishing rules for political life, pushing new political forces into political life and giving them the possibility to reach the highest levels of power. For this to be achieved, the integrity of the authority overseeing the electoral process is essential, as it is responsible for effecting real change in political life, especially when it comes to a political system transitioning toward democracy. Elections are the tool used in the transition process by introducing new elites into political life.

The electoral system plays a fundamental role in the overall construction of emerging democracies. The electoral system has repercussions on party life, increasing or decreasing the size of political parties and their impact on political life. Moreover, the electoral system can push a newly transitioning system toward democratic consolidation or create a new form of electoral dictatorship by producing a dominant party system. These answers and questions lead us to say that making elections a means of change or merely an expressive space is fundamentally linked to the goals set by the authority or the system. If the intention is to move toward consolidation and surpass the transitional phase, it will establish criteria for free and fair elections. However, if it aims to make elections a mere formal expressive space, it will create an electoral scenario that pushes ruling parties and elite toward remaining in power by using the authority granted by the law to direct and shape the electoral system and divide electoral districts.

The process of dividing electoral districts aims to achieve fair representation of voters in the electoral system. However, this process can be used for political purposes to benefit certain parties by manipulating electoral boundaries and directing votes in a way that enhances their interests. The negative impact may occur if the division of electoral districts is used in discriminatory or exclusionary ways against certain racial, social, or political groups. Therefore, elections remain linked to those who hold power and the goals they seek to achieve.

8. Endnote

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