Institutional Interaction and Strategic Voting in Korea's New Mixed Electoral System[*]

Jungug Choi

Korea newly adopted a standard mixed electoral system in March 2004, just a month before the 2004 parliamentary election. Using both district and individual level data from the election, this study addresses the issue of institutional interaction or contamination in a mixed electoral system with focus on a third-place party, the Democratic Labor Party. It finds that there is no meaningful effect of institutional interaction between the SMD and PR sections of a mixed electoral system. Even if SMD and PR are put together into a single mixed electoral system, each of the two is found to retain its independent effect on a party system without much confluence. Thus, in the SMD component, we still observe a significant rate of strategic voting and, consequently, a minor political party is penalized in terms of vote share. Meanwhile, the contaminating effect of SMD on PR is only a conditional effect, which is true only if voters hold favorable preferences toward a minor political party in the first place. Otherwise, the putative effect of SMD on PR does not materialize.

Keywords: Mixed Electoral Systems, Institutional Interaction, Political Party Systems, Strategic Voting, Korea

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of a comprehensive political reform package, Korea newly adopted a standard mixed electoral system in March 2004, just a month before the 2004 parliamentary election. The previous electoral system was also a kind of mixed system in that it featured a proportional representation system (PR) in combination with a single-member district system (SMD). However, it was practically a reinforced simple plurality system. The PR component of the old system was included not to enhance the seat-vote proportionality but to reinforce SMD electoral results already in favor of large parties. In detail, voters were not given two separate ballots but just one for the SMD section. The *PR seats* were distributed in proportion to political parties' nationwide aggregations of votes *in single-member districts*. As a result, they were as good as bonus seats to large parties that had already benefited from SMD.

In the new mixed system, the PR component has, however, become unlocked from the SMD, and each voter has been given two separate ballots, one for PR and the other for SMD.[1] Consequently, the PR component can now better serve its usual purpose of balancing off the seat-vote disproportionality inherent in the SMD. In the new system, small political parties have only to obtain as small as 3% of the nationwide PR vote for parliamentary representation.

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[1] For further discussion of the features of the new system, see Kim (2005).

Despite the fact that the proportion of PR seats in parliament still remains small, i.e., 18.7%, the new system is a simple and straightforward mixed electoral system. Most importantly, it does not include any institutional linkage between the two component systems. The Japanese style of dual candidacy was initially considered for adoption but later discarded due to its bewildering complexities. The German style of tier linkage was not even seriously considered in the first place. Another important feature is that the PR constituency remains nationwide. In other words, the country does not break down into several PR constituencies as in Japan, which would make the effect of increasing the natural threshold, given the small total number of PR seats. For instance, if a PR constituency has a district magnitude of 8, the natural winning threshold is 12.5%. This prohibitively high threshold would go directly against the very idea of PR.

This new Korean electoral system gives us a good opportunity to address one of the contentious issues in comparative politics, i.e., whether or not SMD and PR interact with each other when they are combined into a single mixed system without any institutional linkage between the two. In other words, of great interest is whether each part of a mixed electoral system retains its independent theoretical effect on a political party system. A great number of studies have shown that electoral systems make a significant difference to political party systems or, alternatively, the effective number of parties or candidates.[2] Specifically, unlike PR, SMD is known to contribute to reducing the number of political parties. Our particular interest here is what the combined effect of the two electoral systems would be like.

This issue of institutional interaction or "contamination" is of great importance for both methodological and practical reasons. From a methodological point of view, the existence of contamination would make it difficult to observe the separate effects of SMD and PR in a mixed system. Thus, it would weaken the argument that a mixed electoral system is ideal for controlled comparison by allowing a voter to cast separate SMD and PR ballots in the thoroughly identical context at the same time. From a practical point of view, some political reformers hold that the advantages of both PR and SMD can be enjoyed in mixed systems as the best of both worlds (Shugart and Wattenberg 2001). However, this belief will be obviously mistaken if the institutional contamination overrides the independent effects of the two systems.

The existing small but rapidly expanding literature on this issue is divided. For instance, Cox and Schoppa (2002) as well as Herron and Nishikawa (2001) argue that there is an interaction in mixed systems, whereby the simultaneous holding of PR elections affects election results in SMD and *vice versa*. Thus, the combined effect of PR and SMD is not a simple sum of their separate effects. In contrast, Moser and Scheiner (2004) find that PR and SMD tend to approximate their expected effects even when used in combination.

This study deals with the issue of interaction between the two components of a mixed system using multiple data sets from the 2004 Korean parliamentary election, with special reference to a relatively new and yet quite challenging small party, the Democratic Labor Party (DLP). It begins with theoretical discussion and hypotheses about the effect of institutional interaction on party systems. The subsequent two sections will test the given hypotheses using district-level aggregate election data and individual level survey data,

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[2] The effective number of parties or candidates (N) here is defined as $N = 1 / \sum_{1}^{n} p_i^{2}$, where p's are the vote shares of individual candidates or parties, $0 \leq p \leq 1$, and $\sum_{1}^{n} p_i = 1$ (Taagepera and Shugart 1989: 79).

respectively. Throughout the study, our key interest lies in strategic voting by minor-party supporters.[3] Hence, we will deal only with the DLP, leaving out the two major parties, the Hannara Party (or the Grand National Party) and the Uri Party (or literally, Our Open Party). The final section will conclude with a brief summary and implications.

2. THEORETICAL DISCUSSION AND HYPOTHESES

If the two components of a mixed electoral system interact, voters' final choice in SMD is affected by their concomitant choice in PR, and the reverse is also true. As a result, the effective number of parties or candidates in the SMD component of a mixed system is greater than in a pure SMD but smaller than in a pure PR, and the number of parties in the PR component is greater than in a pure SMD but smaller than in a pure PR. The combined effect of these two is as follows: the overall system-wide number of parties in a mixed system is greater than in a pure SMD but smaller than a pure PR.

In contrast, if there is no effect of interaction, we will have a different set of relationships as follows: N (pure SMD) = N (SMD in mixed system) < N (pure PR), and N (pure SMD) < N (PR in mixed system) = N (pure PR), where N stands for the effective number of parties or candidates in votes. In other words, each subsystem works like a wholly independent electoral system. Individual voters do not take into account political parties' competitiveness on the PR list while casting their SMD ballots, and the reverse is also the case. However, it is worth noting that even in this case, the overall number of parties in a mixed electoral system is greater than in a pure SMD but smaller than in a pure PR. In other words, the system-wide outcome is the same as when the effect of institutional interaction is assumed to be present.

The underlying causal mechanism for the effect of institutional interaction is straight ticket voting, by which I mean that voters choose the same party on both SMD and PR ballots. The institutional effect of the PR component on SMD elections assumes that minor party supporters vote for an SMD candidate against the odds of wasting their SMD votes *simply because* he or she is endorsed by their favorite party. However, this assumption is unreasonable, given that the ultimate goal of voters is to get their representatives elected to advance their individual interests through the legislature. Of course, the seemingly irrational behavior is comprehensible when a different value system is assumed: straight ticket voting is rational if minor-party supporters engage in expressive (or sincere) voting in a single-member district in an attempt to lend additional symbolic support to their PR choice (Cox 1997: 77).

Meanwhile, concerning the reverse effect of SMD on PR, its underlying causality is not intuitively self-evident. It has, however, been argued that voters more likely vote for a PR-list party in the case that this party also fields an SMD candidate. One of the reasons for this is that "by placing a candidate in SMD, the party can increase voter awareness and potentially gain more votes for the PR portion of the election" (Herron and Nishikawa 2001:

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[3] We have some existing studies of split ticket voting in Korea's mixed electoral system (e.g., Park 2004 and Kim 2005). However, split ticket voting is not the same political phenomenon as strategic voting. We have to control for individual preferences to analyze strategic voting in a proper way, while no knowledge of individual preferences is required to explore the issue of split ticket voting. In addition, split ticket voting is not solely produced by those who engage in strategic voting. This implies that the notion of ticket splitting is more extensive than that of strategic voting.

69). In other words, the simple addition of an SMD candidate and the consequent increase in voter awareness of party label may contribute to the party's performance in the PR section.

The above-mentioned contaminating effect of SMD on PR suggests that a minor party field its own candidate in as many single-member districts as possible, given a mixed electoral system. However, it is not a good idea for a minor party to waste its limited financial and human resources on apparently unsuccessful campaigns. In addition, a minor party's SMD candidates themselves are in a position to have to focus all their attention on their own district campaigns and thus have little breathing space to campaign additionally for their party's PR list.

To test the effects of interaction between the two components of a mixed system, I will now present Hypotheses A and B. Hypothesis A is designed to assess the effect of the PR component on SMD elections.

> Hypothesis A: The effect of PR on SMD
> If there is no effect of PR on SMD elections in a mixed system, a third-place party's (in our case, the DLP's) SMD vote share will be markedly smaller than its vote share in PR due to strategic voting in the SMD part, for its given popular support rate. In contrast, if the existence of PR affects voting behavior in SMD, there will be no meaningful difference between the party's SMD and PR vote shares, after controlling for its popular support rate.

To put it another way, suppose that the PR component makes no effect on voting behavior in SMD. Then, a party's SMD vote share will be greater than its PR counterpart due to strategic voting when its support rate is low. As the rate goes up to a certain critical point, the gap between the two vote shares gets increasingly smaller to become zero. Once the rate goes up further beyond the critical point, the party will turn out to be a major party and consequently, it will rather benefit from strategic voting by other party supporters. A political party's vote share in a mixed system varies relying on electoral subsystems and popular support rates, as in Figure 1. Thus, the graph of SMD (Graph A) will have a steeper slope than that of PR (Graph C) if and only if the PR section makes little impact on voting in the SMD section.

Hypothesis B concerns the reverse effect of SMD on PR in a mixed election. It states that a third-place party is likely to gain a greater number of PR votes simply by fielding its candidate in SMD, regardless of chances to win the SMD seat.

> Hypothesis B: The effect of SMD on PR
> Given a party's certain support rate, a third-place party (in our case, the DLP) will obtain additional votes in PR simply by placing its own candidate on the SMD ballot regardless of his or her chances to win the SMD seat. In other words, its vote share in PR will be greater in an area (or district) it has fielded its SMD candidate than elsewhere.

To verify both hypotheses, it is important to control for a third-place party's popular support rate. It is not sufficient to show that a minor party obtains more PR votes in an area where it has successfully fielded its SMD candidate than elsewhere. It is additionally necessary to demonstrate that the party's greater PR vote share in a district having its SMD candidate is not due to its already higher support rate in the district (Herron and Nishikawa 2001).

Figure 1. Graphic Representation of Hypotheses
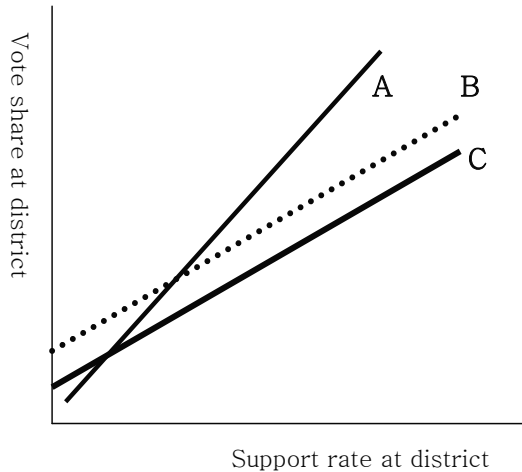
Hypothesis A: In the case of no interaction effect, there is a significant difference in the slope between
　　　　　　　Graph A and B.
Hypothesis B: There is a significant gap between Graph B and C.

Notes: Graph A stands for a party's vote share in SMD; Graph B, for its PR vote share at the same
　　　　district in the presence of SMD candidate; Graph C, for its PR vote share in the absence of
　　　　SMD candidate.

3. INSTITUTIONAL INTERACTION: DISTRICT LEVEL DATA ANALYSIS

To test either of the two hypotheses using district-level election results, we have to obtain the DLP's popular (or pre-election) support rate at district level independently of its 2004 vote share. In this study, we will use as a proxy variable the DLP's vote share at district level in the PR component of the 2002 local council elections, in which the party emerged to be an important minor party for the first time by winning about 8% of the nationwide PR vote. The local elections under a newly introduced mixed electoral system were considered as a test case for the 2004 parliamentary election. However, this proxy variable has some methodological problems. For instance, the habitually low turnouts at local elections might misrepresent genuine support rates, but this problem applies not just to the DLP but also to every other political party. Unless the DLP's turnout alone was exceptionally lower or higher in the 2002 local elections, we may say that the proxy variable is not a gross distortion of support rate at district level for 2004.

There is another methodological problem in testing Hypothesis B. A political party's PR vote share in the absence of its SMD candidate will remain a missing value when its district-level support is significantly high. In contrast, when its district-level support rate is too low, the reverse is true: the party is unlikely to have any SMD candidate, and thus its PR vote share in the presence of its SMD candidate will remain a missing value. As a consequence,

we will be able to compare a political party's PR vote shares in the presence and absence of its SMD candidate only for quite a limited range of its support rates.

In addition, the National Election Commission of Korea publishes political parties' PR vote shares only in *administrative* districts, which are not necessarily coterminous with *electoral* districts. This fact makes us draw on the election outcomes only in 134 out of all 243 single-member districts in testing Hypothesis B.

Meanwhile, to test Hypothesis A using district-level aggregate data, we are able to use data only from electoral districts having a DLP candidate on the SMD ballot. This will cut further down the number of valid observations to 65. The hypothesis compares the DLP's vote share in each single-member district with its corresponding PR share in the same district with respect to the extent of strategic voting. More precisely, it will deal with the issue of whether the DLP's vote share in each single-member district differs from its PR vote share in the same district.

Having said this, let me turn to the actual analysis of Hypothesis A on the effect of PR on SMD elections. Figure 2 portrays how the DLP's vote share varies according to its support rate, depending on electoral subsystems. The star-shaped symbols represent its PR vote shares at district level when the DLP had its own SMD candidates. The triangles stand for its SMD vote shares. The figure shows that when its support rate was relatively low, to say, lower than 20%, the DLP tended to be at a clear disadvantage due to higher rates of strategic voting (or defection) in the SMD component. In contrast, the minor party in the PR component did not have much difficulty gaining as many votes as warranted by its support rate.

Figure 2. Support Rate and Vote Share in SMD and PR
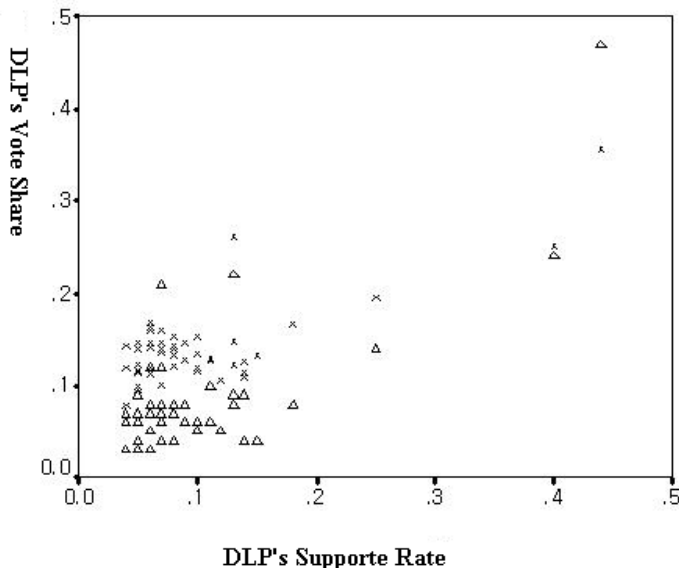
Note: The star-shaped symbols represent the DLP's PR vote shares at district level when it had its own
         SMD candidates. The triangles stand for its SMD vote shares.
Source: The National Election Commission, http://www.nec.go.kr

The two separate regression results for PR and SMD, using the same data set, are given in Table 1. The table shows that the two regression functions along with coefficients are statistically significant. More important, as discussed above, the slope of the SMD regression function is much steeper than that of the PR function. In detail, the relationship between the party's support rate (X) and vote share (Y) is $Y = 0.43X + 0.10$ in PR and $Y = 0.70X + 0.01$ in SMD. This means that a party is disadvantaged in SMD at a lower support rate; however, once its support rate goes up, its vote share also picks up.

Table 1. Regressions of Vote Share on Support Rate: The Democratic Labor Party

PR

independent	coefficient	s.e.	p value
support rate	0.43	0.05	0.00
constant	0.10	0.01	0.00
$R^2 = 0.57$; n = 49; F = 61.73		significance of F = 0.00	

SMD

independent	coefficient	s.e.	p value
support rate	0.70	0.09	0.00
constant	0.01	0.01	0.19
$R^2 = 0.59$; n = 49; F = 66.34		significance of F = 0.00	

Source: The National Election Commission of Korea, http://www.nec.go.kr

This fact means that strategic voting in SMD is not mitigated by the concomitant PR election. In other words, even in a mixed electoral system, voters are induced to vote strategically in the SMD component independently of the concurrent PR election. As a result, minor parties are more disadvantaged in a mixed system than in a pure PR system. This disadvantage is amplified when the SMD component accounts for a greater number of seats in parliament than the PR component. In Korea, there are only 56 PR seats, compared to 243 SMD seats.

To test Hypothesis B, we put the DLP's support rate at district level on the axis of X and its corresponding PR vote share in the presence and absence of its SMD candidate on the axis of Y, as shown in Figure 3. The stars represent those cases that the DLP had its own SMD candidates, while the circles represent the opposite cases.

The figure shows first that as noted above, when the district-level support rate was greater than 20%, the DLP always had its SMD candidate. In contrast, when it was extremely low, to say, lower than 3%, the party did not. Consequently, we are able to test for the effect of the presence of an SMD candidate only for a limited range of support rates.

For the range of 20% or lower rates, it appears that the DLP's SMD candidacy somewhat helped to increase its PR vote share. However, this fact turns out statistically insignificant in terms of the test of difference in means. Thus, we cannot conclude that, as in Hypothesis B, a minor political party obtains more votes in PR simply by placing a candidate on the SMD ballot.

To summarize, the analysis of district level data shows that when two electoral systems are combined into a mixed electoral system, the institutional effect of one component on the other is not as significant as expected, if not completely absent. A political party does not

Figure 3. Support Rate, Existence of SMD Candidate, and Vote Share in PR
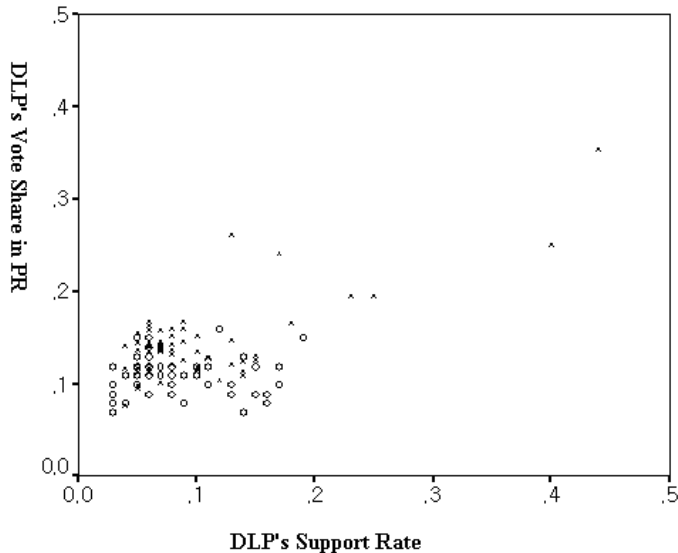
Note: The stars represent those cases that the DLP had its own SMD candidates, while the circles
        represent the opposite cases.
Source: The National Election Commission of Korea, http://www.nec.go.kr.

obtain more votes in the PR component simply by placing its candidate on the SMD ballot.
This denies the putative institutional effect of SMD on PR in a mixed electoral system. The
reverse effect of PR on the component of SMD (or plurality rule) is also quite questionable.
Even when plurality rule is put together with PR, the conventional effect of plurality rule
holds good independently of the PR component. In other words, minor-party supporters still
have a good incentive to engage in strategic voting and thus are likely to desert their favorite
party in final voting under plurality rule.

4. INSTITUTIONAL INTERACTION: INDIVIDUAL LEVEL DATA ANALYSIS

    We have so far dealt with the interaction effect using aggregate level data from the 2004
Korean parliamentary election. This section will analyze the interaction effect using a
different data set, that is, individual level data. The data set is a post-election survey data
taken by the Korean Social Science Data Center in collaboration with the Korean
Association of Election Studies, and the sample size is 1500.
    To test Hypothesis A on the effect of PR on SMD elections, we select out only those who
most favored the DLP and break them down according to their voting behavior in the two
electoral subsystems. The result is shown in Table 2. Voters whose favorite party was the
DLP had three voting options in SMD as well as in PR. They might vote for their first

preference, that is, the DLP, or for their second preferences, or for the others. The table shows that 52% of the DLP supporters voted for their second preferences in SMD, and 31%, in PR.

Table 2. The Effect of Electoral Systems on Voting Behavior: Among the DLP Supporters

SMD				PR			
Vote for the 1st preference, i.e., DLP	Vote for the 2nd preference	Others	Total(n)	Vote for the 1st preference, i.e., DLP	Vote for the 2nd preference	Others	Total(n)
32	**49(52%)**	13	**94**	**56**	**29(31%)**	8	**93**

Note: First preferences here include strict preferences only, but second and other preferences may include indifference. The table excludes invalid votes: one in SMD and two in PR.

Source: Korean Social Science Data Center, *National Election Survey on the 17th Parliamentary Election(in Korean)*, April 2004.

In other words, when we control for preferences for the DLP, the rate of voting for the second preference is much lower in PR than in SMD. Of course, voting for the second preference *in PR* cannot be defined as strategic voting.[4] Rational DLP supporters are not supposed to desert their first preference in the PR component, considering that the DLP's expected vote share far exceeded the legal threshold for PR seat allotment, 3%. Nonetheless, the table shows that the DLP was at a clear disadvantage under plurality rule (or SMD) because a greater number of DLP supporters rather opted not to vote for it in SMD than in PR.[5]

One may not think that this finding is quite new, but so it is, because we are not dealing with two completely independent electoral systems but with the two components of a single electoral system. It is of great significance to have shown with the help of individual level data that voters do not engage in straight ticket voting even when two electoral systems are mixed into one. They tend to vote as if the two components were completely independent electoral systems. In other words, strategic voting in SMD is not affected by the simultaneous PR election.

Meanwhile, Table 3 shows that the DLP obtained more PR votes when it fielded its own SMD candidate than otherwise. When the DLP had its SMD candidate, 60% of its 93 supporters voted for it in PR; in contrast, when it did not, 45% of its 53 supporters opted for it in the end. This fact seems to support the argument that simply by placing a candidate on the SMD ballot, a political party will obtain more votes in the PR component. That is, it seems to provide evidence for the effect of institutional interaction in a mixed electoral system.

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[4] Strategic voting is defined here as voting for their second-best preference by voters whose first preference is quite unlikely to win.

[5] The rate of strategic voting, 52%, is comparatively high. This is a surprise, given that only about 28% of the third-party supporters in the Korean 1997 presidential election voted strategically in a three-way competition(Choi 2003). The relatively high rate of strategic voting in 2004 implies that many DLP supporters carry weak partisanship.

Table 3. The Effect of the Existence of SMD Candidate on Voting in PR: Among DLP
Supporters

DLP candidate in SMD	PR			
	Vote for the 1st preference, i.e., DLP	Vote for the 2nd preference	Others	Total(n)
Yes	56(60%)	29	8	93
No	24(45%)	22	7	53

Source: Korean Social Science Data Center, *National Election Survey*, April 2004.

Nonetheless, this conclusion in support of institutional interaction is valid only if a
precondition is satisfied. Voters would not have voted additionally for the DLP on the PR list
for the only reason that they had seen a DLP candidate run in their single-member district. In
other words, the simple fact that the DLP had an SMD candidate was not sufficient for its
greater vote share in PR. To be susceptible to the effect of institutional interaction, voters had
to form a clear preference for the DLP in the first place. In fact, the above table includes only
those who most favored the DLP. This implies that the institutional effect of interaction
holds good only for a particular set of preference holders.

Further analysis of non-DLP supporters confirms that the putative effect of interaction is
only a conditional effect. As seen in Table 4, the very fact that the DLP had an SMD
candidate did not increase its vote share in the PR component, unless accompanied by a
favorable preference set. Among those whose best choice was not the DLP, its vote share in
PR was slightly greater (3.1%) when it had an SMD candidate than otherwise (2.3%).
However, this difference was not so large as to be statistically significant at all. As a result,
Korean election data do not provide solid evidence for the argument that a political party
obtains additional votes in PR simply by placing a candidate on the SMD ballot. Once we
control for preference structures, the effect of institutional interaction turns out insignificant,
if not absent.

Table 4. The Effect of the Existence of SMD Candidate on Voting in PR: Among Non-DLP
Supporters

DLP candidate in SMD	Vote for the DLP in PR	Vote for other parties in PR	Total (n)
Yes	13(3.1%)	410	423
No	8(2.3%)	336	344

Note: Non-DLP supporters refer to those whose exclusive (or strict) first preference lies in other parties
than the DLP.
Source: Korean Social Science Data Center, *National Election Survey*, April 2004.

To summarize, our analysis of individual level data shows that in a mixed electoral
system without any institutionalized linkage between its two components, one component
does not affect voting in the other component. Voting by minor party supporters in SMD is
not "contaminated" by the concomitant election in PR. As a result, they tend to vote as if

there were no PR election in progress. On the one hand, if they are predisposed to vote strategically under pure (or unmixed) plurality rule, they will continue to do so even in the SMD component of a mixed system, notwithstanding the concurrent PR election. On the other hand, if they tend to prefer to vote sincerely under pure plurality rule, they will engage in sincere (or expressive) voting in the SMD component of a mixed system too. This implies that the overall rate of strategic voting in the SMD component of a mixed system will not decrease due simply to the existence of the PR component.

Meanwhile, concerning the reverse effect of SMD on PR, the simultaneous holding of SMD elections along with PR will not contribute to pulling down or pushing up a political party's vote share in PR. Election results in the PR component are rather a function of popular support rates or individual preference structures. The relatively greater PR vote share of a political party in the presence of its SMD candidate, as seen in the above individual level data analysis, is feasible only if a precondition is satisfied. That is, voters have to hold preference structures in its favor in the first place.

5. CONCLUSION: SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Using both aggregate and individual level data from the 2004 Korean parliamentary election, this study has shown that there is no meaningful effect of institutional interaction between the two components of a mixed electoral system. Even if SMD and PR are put together into a single mixed electoral system, each of the two is found to retain its independent effect on a political party system without much confluence. Thus, in the SMD component, we still observe a significant rate of strategic voting and, consequently, a minor political party is penalized in terms of vote share. From the perspective of voters, they do not modify their inclination to engage in strategic voting or in expressive voting, due simply to the concurrent PR election. In addition, it is not true that simply by placing a candidate on the SMD ballot, a political party gains additional votes in the PR section. Indeed, the above individual level data analysis has shown that the SMD component makes some influence on the PR component, but this so-called contaminating effect of SMD on PR is only a conditional effect. In other words, it holds true only if a precondition is satisfied: voters have to hold favorable preferences toward a political party in the first place. Otherwise, the putative effect of SMD on PR does not materialize.

One may say that our finding of no significant institutional interaction may be the case only with the "simple" type of mixed electoral system as in Korea, that is, one having no supplementary feature of institutionalized interlocking between the SMD and PR components, but it may not with a different variety of mixed electoral system as in Japan, Germany and New Zealand featuring such a linkage. Further comparative research will be required to verify this argument. At the moment, I would say that there is some evidence in support of it (Cox and Schoppa 2002).

One of the important implications of this study is that when we introduce a mixed electoral system as a reform measure, we do not have to worry about an unintended effect of contamination between the SMD and PR components at least in its "simple" type. Instead, we have only to explore the issue of what is the best proportion of PR to SMD seats in parliament. This issue will in turn depend on what is our highest priority in political reform: whether it should be more efficient government or more representative government.

Another implication is that voters' preferences are more crucial than institutional

arrangements. Preferences set a parameter within which institutions work out. Of course, as historical institutionalists argue, institutions may contribute to preference formation itself (Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth 1992). They are however more likely to be only one, and, probably not the most important, of the several variables that determine voters' individual preferences. In line with this, I agree with others that electoral systems are important in determining a political party system, but I do not think that they are the single most important. Those political reformists who often blame everything bad on institutional arrangements or would like to find salvation in a novel institutional engineering in the face of dire political realities have to keep in mind the importance of individual preferences, which will in turn be shaped largely by non-institutional variables.

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Jungug Choi. Assistant Professor of Department of Political Science, Konkuk University, 1 Hwayang-dong, Gwangjin-Gu, Seoul, 143-701, Korea. Tel: 82-2-2049-6083, E-mail: drchoi@konkuk. ac.kr