Electoral Reform and Party Systems in East Asian Democracies:

A Comparative Analysis with Implications for Thailand

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I.   Introduction

That elections and political parties are necessary ingredients of democratic governance is accepted as an incontrovertible fact among most political scientists. Modern democracy is almost by definition representative democracy. Elections are a necessary condition of representative democracy. In representative democracy citizens participate in politics primarily by choosing political authorities in competitive elections. Elections, hence, are a necessary and crucial instrument to make democracy work (Powell 2000).

Representative democracy means party democracy. When democratization takes place, almost immediately, political parties are created. When political parties are created in new democracies and start interacting they create party systems. That the pattern of party politics and the development of party systems are a consequence of numerous factors is common sense in the literature on political parties. However, because electoral systems determine how votes cast in an election are translated into seats won in parliament, the constituent elements of electoral systems are often viewed as essential for the development of any party system. Because it is generally acknowledged that the specific properties of any party system have a strong impact on the quality and consolidation of new democracies, the prevailing wisdom in political science is that 'the choice of the electoral system is among the most important constitutional choices that have to be made in democracies' (Lijphart 1994, 202).

Over the past two decades, numerous East Asian states have undergone transition to democracy (Croissant 2004). One of the most distinctive aspects for democratization has been the way these democracies have sought to manage political change by institutional innovations. A striking aspect of institutional reform in the region is the frequent use of the electoral system as an instrument to influence the development of political parties and party systems. Electoral reforms have typically tried to promote more centrist and stable politics by encouraging fewer, more cohesive and better institutionalized political parties (Croissant 2002; Reilly 2004; Hicken forthcoming). The result is an increasing evolution of East Asia's electoral and party system constellation toward more majoritarian elections and, in some cases, less fractionalized party systems (Croissant 2006a; Reilly 2007). A paradigmatic case is Thailand's 1997 electoral system. Even though the rise of TRT and Thaksin Shinawatra to parliamentary dominance has not been exclusively a consequence of institutional factors, the shift from multi-member district (MMD) plurality system to a mixed electoral system with Single-Member-Districts (SMD) certainly has contributed to the emergence of a dominant party system under control of the Thai Rak Thai.

The aim of this paper is to examine in comparative perspective the electoral and party systems in East Asian democracies. Three research questions will guide the analysis: (1) Which electoral systems can be found in the region?; (2) To what extent are the different party systems in East Asia 'produced', at least in part, by their electoral systems?; (3) What impact have electoral systems on the development of East Asian democracies? Discussing these questions enables us to examine if and how electoral systems influence the development of political parties and contribute to the solution of problems of democratic governance in this region. To illuminate these questions the study analyizes ten 'Neo-democracies' and semi-democratic polities in the region: Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand. The rest of the paper is organized as follows: In the first section, I will describe two core challenges of democratic governance in East Asia. The second section summarizes the various electoral institutions used across East Asia. The third section looks at the impact of electoral systems on three

levels of the political system: representation, integration and governability. The final section provides some tentative conclusions.

II. Challenges for Democratic Governance in East Asia

Nascent democracies in East Asia and elsewhere are confronted with numerous challenges and problems. Apart from specific problems of democratic governance in individual countries, the following two fundamental challenges can be pointed out:

1) *Conflict vs. compromise.* Democracy is a system of institutionalized competition (Dahl 1989). The very nature of the democratic process and democratic legitimacy provides incentives for politicians and political parties for formulating competing claims and mobilizing followers along the lines of social cleavages and conflicting interests. However, without a commitment to non-violent means, democracy cannot prevail. Therefore, democracy presupposes 'the taming of politics' (Sartori 1995, 105). Tamed competition is a political precondition for democracy (ibid.). Some of the taming mechanisms identified by students of democracy and democratization include pacts, elite settlements, power-sharing and the institutionalization of fair, general rules that risk a loss of power. This requires commitment among political elites and citizens to act within certain boundaries, based on a certain degree of civility, tolerance of dissent and mutual trust in the willingness of political actors to cooperation, agreement, and compromise. The fundamental tension between political conflict and democratic compromise is reconciled when all relevant political actors accept the institutional order and formal procedures of the political system as 'the only game in town' (Przeworski, 1986). Regarding the political consequences of elections and electoral system, the relevant question is whether political parties and elites accept the mutual right of non-violent competition, or if their political actions exceed the limits of democratic competition before, during or after elections by directly or indirectly promoting discrimination, violence or electoral fraud. To what extent do state organizations maintain neutral during elections and which role is played by military and police? Especially in the course of crucial political events as elections it can be considered a sign of maturity of old democracies and the consolidation of young democracies, when public institutions such as electoral commissions, courts, public administrations, the military, and the police can keep their obligation to neutrality during the course of elections. Conversely, it should be scrutinized closely if and how political parties and elites try to manipulate or politicize those organizations.

2) *Inclusiveness vs. Effectiveness.* Democracy is government by consent of the governed. Thus, democracy depends on what the German sociologist Max Weber called 'the popular belief in legitimacy' (Weber, 1972) much more than any other form of government. Legitimacy, though, requires a sufficient degree of social and political inclusiveness and political effectiveness of the political process. Electoral systems may contribute to the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the political process in various ways. They may enhance institutional inclusion by yielding proportional results in parliamentary elections (Croissant, 2002b, 11). Electoral systems may improve institutional efficiency by reducing the degree of fragmentation of political party systems and promoting the formation of stable governments. In addition, electoral systems may increase institutional effectiveness by producing symmetric majorities in parliaments and governments. On the other hand, electoral systems can also have diminishing effects on institutional inclusiveness, efficiency, and effectiveness. It decreases political and social inclusiveness, when its high electoral disproportionality discriminates against relevant social and political groups. It diminishes institutional efficiency when it hampers the formation of political majorities; and it reduces institutional

effectiveness when, for example, in presidential systems of governance, it generates competing majorities in parliaments and governments (ibid.).

The challenges described concern the democratic system as a whole. Electoral and party systems are two of numerous factors that exert some influence on how new democracies deal with these challenges. However, the fact that elections and electoral systems play a formative role in shaping broader norms of political behaviour means that they are 'the most specific manipulable instrument of politics' (Sartori 1994, 273). Although in different contexts electoral systems produce different outcomes, the conventional wisdom is that plurality systems are at best suboptimal regarding how they fulfil the requirements of social inclusiveness. They often discriminate against relatively large social and political groups; because they entail lower proportionality between votes and the distribution of parliamentary seats among political parties, they tend to facilitate the swift formation of more narrow majorities while they decrease institutional inclusiveness. The PR electoral system, on the other hand, promotes institutional inclusiveness, but hampers institutional efficiency and effectiveness (Lijphart 1994 and 1999).[1]

III.   Electoral Systems in East Asia

The literature on voting systems identifies two basic types of electoral systems: the plurality (first-past-the-post) system and the proportional representation (PR) system. The different technical elements of both systems can be combined in various forms. Within the immense diversity of electoral systems worldwide, in fact both electoral models often occur in combination, while the logic of either the PR system or the plurality system is predominant (Nohlen/Kasapovic 1996). Electoral systems combining elements of PR and plurality systems are called 'mixed-member-systems' (MMS, cf. Shugart/Wattenberg 2001 a).[2] According to their overall working logic, we can distinguish two variants of mixed-member-systems: mixed-member proportional representation (MMP) and mixed-member majoritarian systems (MMM) (ibid.):

- MMP electoral systems are a form of proportional representation. It combines – or 'mixes' – the proportional features of a list-PR system with the local representation of a single-member plurality system. Under MMP, each voter has two votes: one for the party-list and one for the candidate in the district. The total vote received by each party is the basis for determining the exact number of seats awarded to that party. There is, hence, some form of compensatory mechanism between both the district component and the party-list component.

- Another type of a mixed-member model is the mixed-member majoritarian system. Under such systems, part of the legislature is elected, usually at a national level, by proportional representation, and the rest from local districts. In most cases, more seats are allocated in single-seat districts with plurality rule than in the nationwide tier of PR seats; seats are allocated in parallel (i.e. non-compensatory). MMM is a voting system that is essentially power concentrating. It reduced party system fragmentation by 'systematically squeezing the number of parliamentary parties' (Norris, forthcoming).

Not surprisingly, in view of the many historical, political, economic and social differences among East Asian nations, there is a great deal of variation in the region's electoral systems. Despite this divergence, there has been something of a convergence in recent years. As Benjamin Reilly explains, 'congruent electoral reform patterns were evident across the region, with South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Japan, East Timor and Thailand all choosing «mixed-member» electoral system models during the last decade' (Reilly 2007, 187-88). In addition, there are two PR systems and three plurality systems in the region. Table 1 displays the distribution of types of electoral systems across the region. Electoral systems are classified according to the electoral formula used for translating votes into seats into three major families of majoritarian, plurality or mixed-member system.

Table 1: Electoral systems in East Asia

	Cambodia (2003)	Indonesia (2004)	Malaysia (2004)	Singapore (2006)	Philippines (2004)	Thailand (2005)	East Timor (2007)	South Korea (2004)	Taiwan (2007)*	Mongolia (2004)
Electoral Formula	Closed List PR	Modified Open List PR	Plurality	Plurality	List PR & Plurality	List PR & Plurality	List PR & Plurality	List PR & Plurality	List PR & Plurality	Two-round plurality
Tiers	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1
District Magnitude (PR)	1-8	4-82	--	--	51	100	75	56	34/6**	--
District Magnitude (Plurality)	--	--	1	1 / 3-6***	1	1	1	1	1	1
No. of Districts (PR)	21	27	--	--	1	1	1	1	1 / 2	--
No. of Districts (Plurality)	--	--	170	24	198	400	13	243	73	76
Assembly Size	120	500	170	83	250	500	88	299	113	76
Per cent of seats by PR	100	100	0	0	20	20	85	19	35	0
Party Threshold (Party-list component)	None	None	--	--	2%****	5%		3%	5%	--
Electoral System	PR	PR	Plurality	Plurality	MMM	MMM	MMM	MMM	SNTV / MMM	SNTV / Majority

PR: proportional representation; MMM: mixed-member majoritarian systems; SNTV: single-non-transferable vote.
* Before the December 2007 legislative election, the electoral model was SNTV; **6 seats reserved for aborigines; ***Some single seats exist alongside Group Representation Constituencies (GRC) with magnitude of 3-6 seats; ****There is a 6% cap, i.e. parties cannot win more than 3 seats.

While mix-member proportional systems are in use in a number of Western countries (for example, Germany and New Zealand), none have been adopted in Asia. Rather, every East Asian mixed-member system runs the list component of elections in parallel with the district contest, but with not interchange or compensation between the two. In addition, most East Asian nations also use vote thresholds or seat caps on the party list (see Table 1). Finally, most of these mixed-member systems are heavily weighted in favour of the district element of the system – making them operate more like straight plurality systems than mixed-member models elsewhere (Reilly 2006, 109-10; Shugart/Wattenberg 2001a, 20-21).

East Asia's turn toward plurality and mixed-member majoritarian systems has occurred in different contexts. In Singapore and Malaysia, the introduction of plurality systems occurred during the process of decolonization and the emergence of semi-democratic polities. Governments first adopted the British electoral system in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Later, changes to the electoral rules were unilaterally decided upon by the ruling parties leading to electoral systems that are highly advantageous to them (Hwee 2002; Lim and Ong 2006).[3]

In Korea, Japan and Taiwan, governments have introduced mixed systems as replacement for or supplement to the single non-transferable vote (SNTV; Croissant 2002a; Reilly 2007). In Thailand and the Philippines, by contrast, mixed systems replaced plurality or plurality-like systems, such as the block vote in Thailand and the plurality system in Philippines (Orathai 2002; Teehankee 2002 and 2006).

Both SNTV and block vote systems share similar drawbacks: they tend to encourage parties to put forward multiple candidates for election in the same district, thus encouraging intra-party competition. By forcing candidates from one party to compete against each other for the same pool of votes in one district, both systems emphasize personalistic attributes over and above those of the party (Hsieh/Newman 2002). They, hence, promote problems of political party and party system institutionalization and obstruct the development of more "settled and aggregative party systems" (Diamond 1996, 239).

It is generally acknowledged that institutional choices have historically inhibited the development of strong parties in East Asia (Tan 2005: 653). Just as the dominance of 'strong' executive offices, the illiberal nature of the region's polities and the manipulation of electoral rules in the authoritarian era has retarded the development of well institutionalized political parties, patronage and personalistic politics are major weaknesses of electoral politics and the political party systems in most East Asian 'Neo-Democracies' (Dalton/Chu/Shin 2007).

Not surprisingly, in countries which switched to mixed-member-systems, these reforms were driven by the hope of reforms that their new electoral formula would undermine the institutional foundations of these shortcomings. For instance, in South Korea, the Philippines and Taiwan, important motives were to build behavioral incentives against pork-barrel politics, to breakup the domination of politics by traditional elites (Philippines), and to encourage political parties to concentrate on the national electorate than on regional audiences (Korea; cf. Co et al. 2005; Lee 2006). Furthermore, the limited number of proportional representation seats and the lack of compensatory mechanisms between both the district component and the party-list component can be explained as an attempt to minimize the risk of political fragmentation by restricting the electoral prospects of small parties (ibid.).

Shugart and Wattenberg (2001b) conclude that multi-member-majoritarian systems like those in East Asia are more likely than most alternatives to produce 'two-block' party systems, and more likely than any other to simultaneously generate local accountability. At a first glance, mixed-member majoritarian systems, thus, seem to be a suitable and effective instrument for improving the quality of a democracy by simultaneously promoting the formation of party majorities and party accountability.

Despite this, mixed-member systems also have a number of clear disadvantages (Norris 2002; Reilly 2006). By privileging local districts over national lists, they continue to generate structural incentives favoring personal rather than party-based electoral support. By dividing seats between the district and list tiers, they create two classes of representatives. Most importantly, the failure of MMM-systems to guarantee proportionality means that some parties and the segments of society who support them can be shut out of representation. This, however, can lead to an over-concentration of party systems and a dramatically low degree of inclusiveness of elected institutions (Croissant 2002a). In this regard, Thailand has offered something of a textbook example. Thai reformers hoped that the 1997 shift to single-member-districts (SMDs) would undercut the prevalence of 'money politics' since local candidates would not have to rely on local agents to the same extent as they had in multi-member electorates (Orathai 2002; Chambers 2005). Reform advocates therefore argued that electoral change would reduce the impacts of vote-buying, patronage, and corruption. At the same time, more stable party allegiances and programmatic strategies could emerge (Chambers 2006; Reilly 2007). As Allen Hickens explains, "The drafters hoped that adding a national party list tier and doing away with intra-party competition would encourage voters and candidates to focus more on party policy positions regarding national issues" (Hicken 2001, 107). Consequently, as bargaining power would shift from candidates to political parties, the loosely structured, diverse and short-lived multiparty-coalition governments of the 1990s would make room for stable and cohesive party governments.

However, as one western student of Thai politics pointed out, the 'architects of reform do not seem to have anticipated […] potential drawbacks of their scheme' (McCargo 2002, 14). The most significant of these 'drawbacks' was the rise of TRT and its founder, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, to political dominance. Even though the specific explanatory weight of institutional variables is highly controversial (cf. Hicken, 2007; Chambers, 2007; Nelson, 2007), it is likely that electoral reforms were instrumental in the rise of "Thaksinocracy". One might say the electoral model has worked too well.

IV.   The Political Consequences of Electoral Systems in East Asia

This brings us to the third point in this presentation. What have been the consequences of electoral reforms in East Asian nations? To what extent do electoral systems promote representation and inclusiveness of political institutions, the development of settled and aggregative party systems and the formation of stable and effective governments?

One way of gaining traction on this question is to look at the degree to which electoral systems promote the inclusiveness of democratic institutions. Another way is to examine the impact of electoral systems on the patterns of changes in party systems over time.

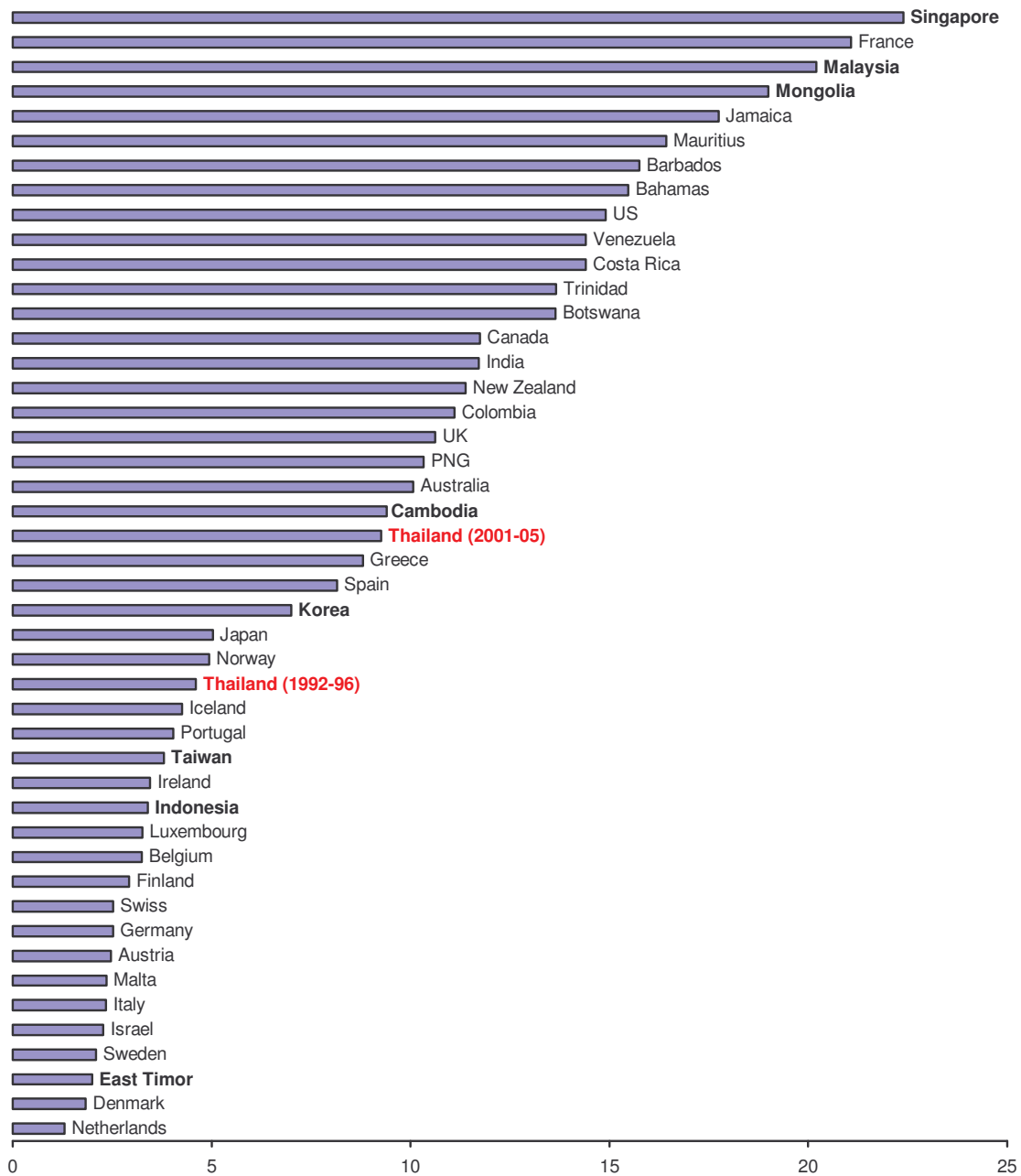*(1) The impact of electoral systems on representation and inclusiveness of parliaments in East Asia*

The extent to which electoral systems promote the inclusiveness of political institutions depends, among others, on their degree of proportionality. Proportionality or, in more specific terms, disproportionality refers to the deviation between the vote shares of political parties and their share of seats in parliament (Lijphart 1994, 57-77). Substantial distortion in the proportionality of vote-seat relations is an indication of poor representation and a lack of inclusiveness. Adequate conversion of votes into seats, by contrast, is an indication of better representation (cf. Powell/Vanberg 2000).

The prevailing wisdom arising from previous research about the workings of electoral systems is that PR electoral systems are designed to translate the percentage of votes relatively proportionally into percentages of seats won, lowering the thresholds for smaller parties. Therefore we would expect that PR systems tend to produce small vote-seat deviations. Majoritarian-plurality systems, by contrast, require a higher effective vote threshold and they are essentially power-concentrating (cf. Blais and Maiscotte 1996; Lijphart 1994; Taagepara and Shugart, 1989). Therefore, we would expect larger disproportionality arising from these systems.

The most widely used indicator to measure the proportionality of electoral systems is the Gallagher's index of disproportionality (Gallagher 1991).[4] To illustrate the change in the proportionality of election results between pre-reform and post-reform elections, the following Figure 1 includes two values for Thailand – the first value is the mean disproportionality for the period 1992 to 1996, the second score provides the mean value for the two post-reform elections.

Figure 1 shows that the overall disproportionality in East Asian electoral systems ranges from 2 percent in East Timor to over 22 percent in Singapore. In general the values presented in Figure 1 conform to what we would expect. In Thailand, for instance, the degree of electoral disproportionality rose significantly after electoral reforms were introduced. Benjamin Reilly notes three reasons for this outcome: First, the new MMM system was 'parallel in nature, meaning that there is no compensation of any seat-votes disparities from the district seats with seats from a party list'. Second, the balance of seats is 'strongly weighted in favour of the district component'. Third, Thailand has 'placed restrictions on the proportionality of the PR component of its mixed system' by introducing a 5% threshold (Reilly, 2004, 35).

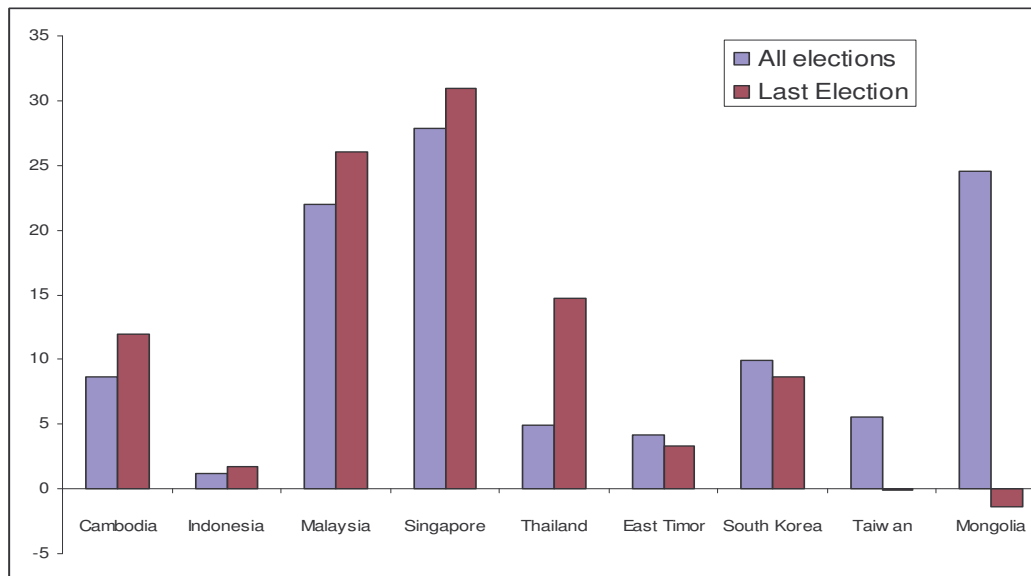Figure 1: Electoral Disproportionality (Lower or only House of Parliament)

Note: Excludes Philippines because of lacking data.

However, it is worth noting that compared to other regions, most East Asian electoral systems produce moderate disproportionality. Exceptions are Mongolia, Malaysia and Singapore which are among the most disproportional electoral systems in this sample of forty-six countries. In Malaysia, for example, mal-apportionment benefiting bumiputra parties with strongholds in rural districts with predominantly Malay constituencies is the key variable for explaining high disproportionality in Malaysia (Lim 2002). This has titled the electoral system in favor of one particular political party – the UMNO. Simultaneously, the electoral system discourages the representation of opposition parties in parliament. Singapore's electoral system is even more advantageous to the ruling party which gains the largest seat bonus from disproportionality.

As Figure 3 displays that in terms of overrepresentation of the largest party there are three clusters of East Asian electoral systems. Unsurprisingly, the largest seat bonus for the leading party is being found in plurality and majority electoral system. Mixed-member-systems get relatively moderate scores, whereas PR rule in Indonesia ranks last. The deviant case, however, is Cambodia's PR electoral system.

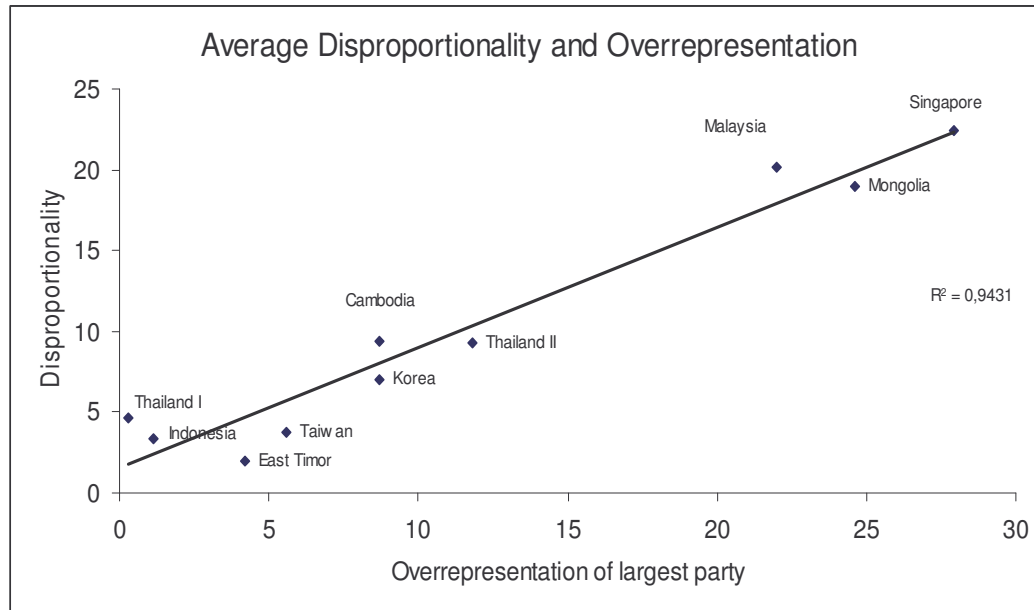Figure 3: Overrepresentation of the leading party in parliament

Note: Overrepresentation measure is the (mean) decimal share of seats minus share of the vote for the leading party at each election. No data available for the Philippines.

The following Figure 4 demonstrates that in most cases there is a strong correlation between disproportionality and overrepresentation of the leading party. In other words: a single party, usually the party in power, benefits most from low proportionality. This is a general feature of East Asian electoral systems not only the case in highly disproportional electoral systems like Singapore, Malaysia and Mongolia. The electoral systems in Cambodia and Thailand (after 1997) display a similar effect as the Cambodian People's Party and Thai Rak Thai clearly were the major beneficiary. At the other extreme are Indonesia and Thailand's pre-reform electoral system, which place the largest party (in terms of votes) at almost no advantage relative to other parties (in terms of seats). Only the 2004 parliamentary elections in

Mongolia and Taiwan buck this trend. Even though the difference is small, in both elections the percentage of seats won by the largest party/alliance was less than the percentage of votes – somewhat surprisingly given Mongolia's two-round majority system.

Figure 4: Average disproportionality and overrepresentation (regression coefficient)

(2)   The impact of electoral systems on party systems

As noted in the introduction, the desire to manufacture more 'mature' political parties and aggregated party systems has driven electoral reform in many East Asian nations. In order to gain traction on this aspect we have to look at the impact of electoral systems on the structure of national party systems and the characteristics of East Asian political parties.

A well-known proposition in comparative politics is Maurice Duverger's so-called 'sociological law' (Duverger 1954). This proposition is stating simply that, other things being equal, under PR system, a multiparty system is likely to emerge; conversely, SMD plurality voting will lead to a two-party system (1964: 217-226; see also Riker 1982). The reason that SMD plurality voting brings about a two-party system involves strategic behavior by both politicians/parties and the voters. Duverger dubbed this the 'mechanical' and 'psychological factors' in the workings of electoral systems:

The mechanical factor of SMD plurality rule is that all but the strongest parties are severely underrepresented because they tend to loose in each district.

The psychological factor reinforces the mechanical one, because voters realize that their votes are wasted if they opt for third parties. Therefore, they tend to transfer their votes to one of the two strongest parties. This psychological factor operates also at the 'supply side' of the political market: prospective candidates do not want to burn their political careers by running as non-performing third-party candidates; thus, as good office-seekers, they will join larger parties to improve their chance.

For alternative plurality systems such as MMM, results similar to SMD plurality can be expected. Under PR systems, on the other hand, strategic behavior for politicians and voters as well as stronger proportionality encourages party multiplicity in general and the representation of smaller parties in particular.

A useful method to unearth the effects of Duverger's mechanical factor is to compare effective number of parties. The so-called 'effective number of parties' (ENP) is the most widespread indicator of party system fragmentation used in comparative politics. Designed in 1979 by Markku Laakso and Rein Taagepera, it can be measured at the level of votes (effective number of elective parties, ENEP) or of seats (effective number of legislative parties, ENLP). The measure can be simply described as 1 divided by the sum of the scared decimal shares of the vote for (or seats won by) each electoral party. Taking both the absolute number of parties and their relative weights (in terms of seat share or vote share) into account, the ENP is arguably a good parsimonious operationalization of the number of 'relevant' parties (Laakso/Taagepera 1979).

Comparing the effective number of elective parties (ENEP) and the effective number of legislative parties (ENLP) tells us about the degree of defractionalization of party systems brought about by the conversion of votes into seats (i.e. 'squeezing' the number of parties in parliament) , which is central to the study of electoral systems. Table 2 demonstrates that all electoral systems to some extent mechanically concentrate the party system by producing ENLPs that are smaller than the ENEP.

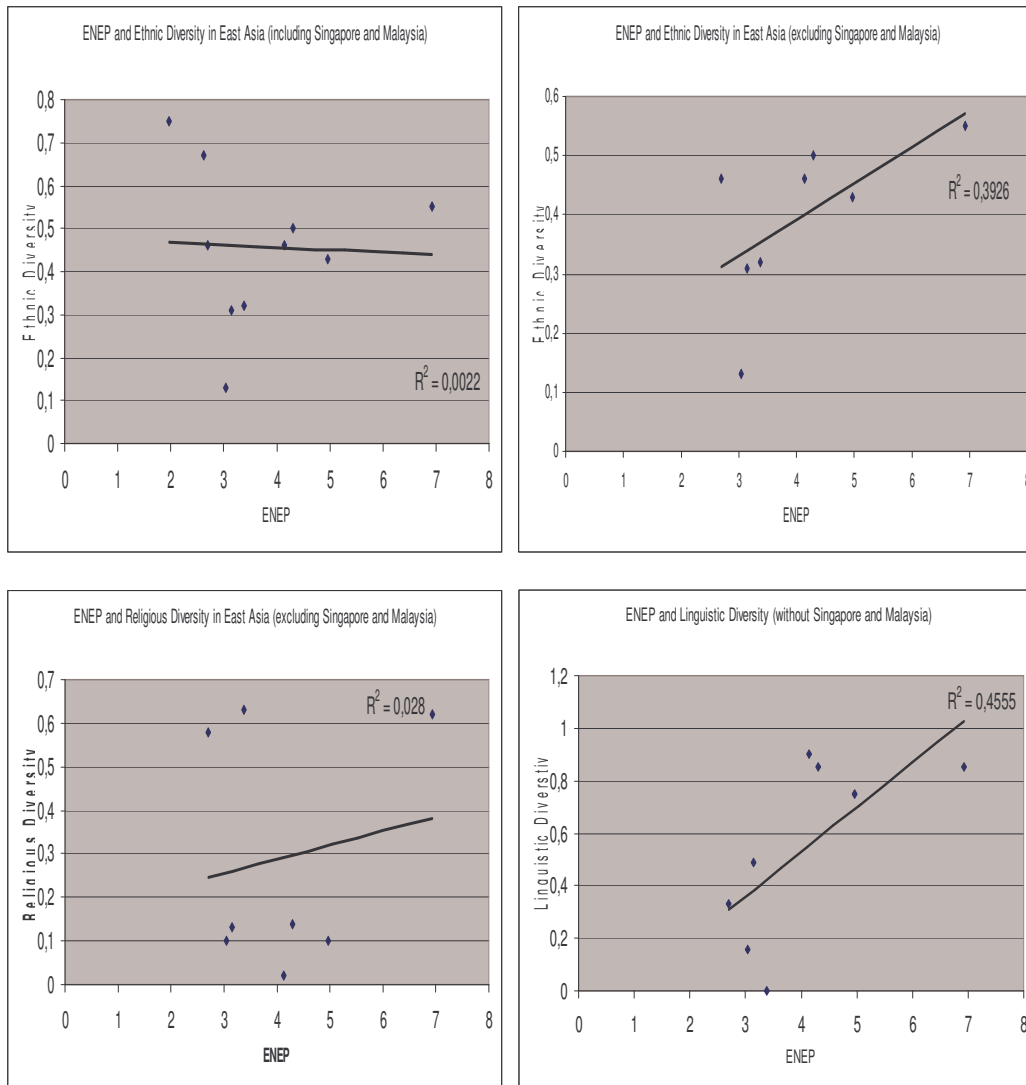Table 2: Mechanical concentration and the fragmentation of party systems

	Parliamentary Fragmentation		Electoral Fragmention		Mechanical Concentration	
	Mean ENLP (A)	ENLP Last Election (B)	Mean ENEP (C)	ENEP Last Election (D)	C-A	D-B
Cambodia (1993-2003)	2.36	2.29	3.04	2.90	.98	.61
East Timor (2001-2007)	3.61	4.36	4.13	5.41	.52	.95
Indonesia (1999-2004)	6.32	7.14	6.93	8.79	.61	1.65
Malaysia (1959-2004)	1.57	1.22	2.62	2.12	1.05	.90
Mongolia (1992-2004)	1.31	2.01	2.70	2.27	1.39	.26
Philippines (1987-2004)	4.90	4.30	*4.30	N/A	.60	N/A
Singapore (1968-2006)	1.03	1.05	1.96	2.04	.93	.99
South Korea (1988-2004)	2.83	2.36	3.38	3.37	.52	1.01
Taiwan (1992-2004)	2.81	3.28	3.15	3.37	.34	.09
Thailand (1992-2005)	4.32	1.65	4.96	2.39	.64	.74
East Asian average	3.10	2.96	3.71	3.62	.61	.68

Note: We calculated the effective number of parliamentary parties using Laakso and Taagapera's (1979) measure N for each of election in our data set. N weights parties by the proportion of seats they receive, thus reducing the influence on the measure of parties that receive few seats. N is calculated for n parties receiving seats, and for pi representing the proportion of seats in the legislature controlled by party i or, one divided by the sum of the squared proportions of the seats. Effective number of electoral parties (ENEP) weights parties by the proportion of votes they receive. Source: Reilly (2007), Croissant (2002, 2006), Election Commissions of various countries.
* Average 1987-1998; for 2001 and 2004 no data are available.

Even though Duverger's 'mechanical factor' can be verified, the level of party fragmentation is different from what one would expect in view of Duverger's 'party law'. For example, Cambodia practices a PR system but the number of parties is small, while in the Philippines and South Korea mix-member majoritarian systems are in use, but both party systems are more fragmented than we would expect. One reason is that while there is a positive relationship between electoral system and party fragmentation, it appears mediated by other factors. One factor that comes to mind is social diversity, i.e. the fragmentation of East Asian societies along religious, cultural or ethnic cleavages. As political parties in theory represent the political expression of underlying social cleavages, we would expect more fragmented societies to have more fragmented party systems too.

Figure 5: Party System Fragmentation and Social Diversity in East Asia (regression coefficient)

Note: The Index of Ethnic Diversity (IED) applied here is a composite index based on the arithmetic mean of the index of linguistic fragmentation and the index of religious fragmentation. The index number for linguistic fragmentation – expressed with Rae's formula of fractionalization, $1-\sum(pi)^2$, where pi represents the percentage of a language i in a total population – are taken from the Ethnologue dataset (Gordon, Raymond G., Jr., eds., Ethnologue. Languages of the World, Dallas 152005, http://www.ethnologue.com/ethno_docs/distribution.asp?by=country). Data for religious fragmentation have been calculated accordingly with data provided by CIA World Factbook 2007 and the Fischer Weltalmanach 2006 (eight religious categories: Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Sino-Japonic, indigenous, a-religious, and residual).

According to the regression coefficient accompanying Figure 5, the variation in party fragmentation across East Asia can in part be explained by differences in ethno-linguistic fragmentation – but only when Singapore and Malaysia are excluded from the sample. The latter must not surprise as the semi-democratic political order in both countries aim to depoliticize ethnic and racial cleavages through various instruments which include legislation on political parties, restrictions on opposition parties, and the formation of an interethnic party (Singapore's PAP) or an alliance of parties

(the Malaysian Barisan Nasional) whose components operate as a single party at elections. For the remaining sample of eight nations, however, a positive relationship between party numbers and social diversity – especially along linguistic differences as captured in the linguistic diversity index – can be found, which explains between one-third and nearly half of the variation in party fragmentation across the sample.

In sum it seems appropriate to conclude that while there is an overall relationship between voting systems and party numbers confirming overall the conventional wisdom in the research on the link between electoral institutions and party systems, there are deviant cases and the overall relationship appears mediated by other factors. One of these factors is the ethno-linguistic heterogeneity of societies; others are perhaps the preponderance of regional divisions and sub-national identities, or the 'weight of history', i.e. the manufacturing of political parties during authoritarian rule and path dependence of patterns of party competition (Croissant 1997 and 2006; Manacsa and Tan 2005; Ockey 2005). Combined, this suggests that in view of the diverging social contexts in which political parties in East Asia operate, it is unlikely that institutional engineering will work as smooth as reformers believe it could.

The effective number of parties index generates a number that conveys information about fragmentation. The great advantage of this measure is to offer a simple to calculate and easily understandable index of the number of political parties in competition; for example, a figure of 2.0 tells us that the party system is as fragmented as if there were 2.0 equal-sized parties. Despite this it also has a number of disadvantages. For example, it produces misleading results in single-party majority situations as it still indicates that more than one party is 'relevant' in terms of government formation. It can also be misleading about the 'real' pattern of party competition because it weights the largest parties most, while small parties and tiny parties count for very little. Furthermore, it is not conveying much information about the concentration or aggregation of parliamentary party systems in multiparty systems with more than three parties. Even though reading the index gives information about the (effective) number of parties, it remains unclear whether one or two parties dominate the system or if there is a balance among the parties.[5] In the Philippines, for instance, the effective number of legislative parties for each election between 1992 and 2004 indicates a moderately fractionalized multiparty system. However, there was a dominant party from 1992 to 2001 but not in 2004. The ENLP for Thailand's first post-reform election in 2001 indicates the existence of a moderate multiparty system. But this classification neglects that the Thai Rak Thai party won a seat share of 49.8 percent and, hence, clearly dominated the party system.

In addition, while fractionalization is a core element of the structure of national party systems, this single factor is not sufficient to classify party systems (Sartori 1976; Wolinetz 2006). A more advanced scheme to sort and classify divergent patterns of party competition has been introduced by Alan Siaroff (2000). The starting point for his classification is Giovanni Sartori's (1976) seminal analysis of party fragmentation and differentiation of three overall categories: two-party systems, moderate multiparty systems, and extreme multiparty systems. In addition, Siaroff uses multiple measures to tap the aggregation of parliamentary party systems – in other words: the balance among parties in terms of the relative size and strength of political parties. In order to measure the number of parties, Siaroff calculates the number of legislative parties winning at least 3% of the seats (P3%S). The relative balance among parties is measured by three indicators: (1) The mean two-party seat concentration (2 PSC); (2) the medium seat ratio between the first and the second party (SR1:2); and (3) the medium seat ratio between the second and the third party

(SR2:3). The resulting scheme categorizes party systems according to the number of parties and the relative balance among them into eight different categories:

Table 3: Classification of party systems

		Number of parties		
		Two party system	Moderate multiparty system	Extreme multiparty system
Relative size and strength of parties	One party dominance		Multiparty-system with one dominant party	Extreme multiparty system with one dominant party
	Two party dominance	Two-party system	Two-and-a-half party system Moderate multiparty system with two main parties	Extreme multiparty systems with tow main parties
	Balance among parties		Moderate multiparty systems with a balance among the parties	Extreme multiparty systems with a balance among the parties

Explanation: (1) Two-party systems: mean P3%S between 2 and 3 and a mean 2PSC of at least 95 percent; (2); Moderate multiparty systems, which are in fact two-and-a-half party systems: P3%S of 3-5; 2 PSC between 80-95 percent; SR1:2 of below 1.6 and a median SR2:3 of 1.8 or more; (3) Moderate multiparty system with one dominant party: mean P3%S of 3-5 and a median SR1:2 of 1.6 or more; (4) Moderate multiparty system with two main parties (P3%S of 3-5, a median SR1:2 below 1.6 and a median SR2:3 of 1.8 or more); (5) Moderate multiparty systems with a balance among the parties (P3%S of 3-6, SR1:2 below 1.6, SR2:3 below 1.8; (6) Extreme multiparty systems: Extreme multiparty system with one dominant party: P3%S of more than 5, and a median SR1:2 of 1.6 or more; (7) Extreme multiparty systems with tow main parties: P3%S of more than 5, median SR1:2 below 1.6 and a median SR2:3 of 1.8 or more; (8) Extreme multiparty systems with a balance among the parties: P3%S of more than 5, median SR1:2 below 1.6, and a median SR2:3 below 1.8.

Based on the above criteria and using the data given in the appendix, East Asian party systems are classified in the following Table 4. I have added the category of one dominant party systems (a party system with a mean P3%S of 3 or less, a mean 2PSC of at least 75 percent, and a mean SR1:2 of 2.0 or more) to Siaroff's classification to catch a phenomenon that is neglected by Siaroff: the domination of nominal two-or-more-than-two party systems by a single political party which controls at least twice as many seats as any other party and, simultaneously, the majority of seats in parliament.

Table 4: Classification of Party Systems

Country	Classification
Cambodia	
1993 - 1998	Two-and-a-half-party system
2003	Moderate multiparty system with one dominant party
East Timor	
2001	Moderate multiparty system with one dominant party
2007	Moderate multiparty systems with a balance among the parties
Indonesia	
1999	Moderate multiparty system wit a balance among the parties
2004	Extreme multiparty system with two main parties
Philippines	
1987	Extreme multiparty system with a balance among the parties
1992	Extreme multiparty system with one dominant party
1995-2001	Moderate multiparty system with one dominant party
2004	Moderate multiparty system with a balance among the parties
South Korea	
1988	Moderate multiparty system with one dominant party
1992	Two-and-a-half-party system
1996	Moderate multiparty system with one dominant party
2000 - 2004	Two-and-a-half-party system
Taiwan	
1992	Two-party system
1995	Two-and-a-half-party system
1998	Moderate multiparty-system with one dominant party
2001	Moderate pluralism with a balance among the parties
2004	Moderate pluralism with two main parties
Thailand	
1992 - 1995	Extreme multiparty system with a balance among the parties
1996	Extreme multiparty system with two main parties
2001	Moderate multiparty system with one dominant party
2005	Single dominant party system
Mongolia	
1992 - 1996	Two party system with one dominant party
2000	Single dominant party system

2004	Two party system
Singapore	
1968 - 2006	Single dominant party system
Malaysia	
1959	Moderate multiparty system with one dominant party
1964	Two-party system with one dominant party
1969	Extreme multiparty system with one dominant party
1974 - 2004	Multiparty system with one dominant party

Source: see appendix.

The Table demonstrates that most countries have experienced multiple 'party systems'; the 'record' seems to be that of Taiwan, which has gone through five different 'party systems' in exactly as many elections. It is followed by Thailand and the Philippines which have each had four different party systems in a classificatory sense over five elections. On the other hand, Malaysia and Singapore have each had the same party system throughout the past three to four decades. Most East Asian party systems, hence, neither discern strong symptoms of stabilization nor of destabilization. Conversely, comparing numerous elections might suggest the 'freezing' of the pattern of party competition in a status of protracted non-consolidation. If this conclusion can be far going remains to be seen in the case of very 'young' democracies such as Indonesia and East Timor; general fluidity of party systems during the first and second election, is common feature in new democracies. However, the data for the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan and South Korea demonstrate that frequent changes between different types of multiparty systems are the rule even 15 to 20 years after democratization.

One might say that Siaroff's classification is referring not to 'classes' of party system but to patterns of party strengths which have resulted from particular election outcomes. On this note, his scheme is useful to analyze changes of the patterns of party competition over two or more elections (Wolinetz 2006, 58). In this case, one may conclude that most (if not all) East Asian democracies (which would exclude Singapore and Malaysia) are in a period of pronounced electoral volatility, in which few parties can count on automatic support from loyal electorates.

Provided that this interpretation is correct, we would expect a high degree of electoral volatility across East Asian party systems. The most often used indicator to measure the stabilization/destabilization in voting behaviour and patterns of inter-party competition is Pederson's Index of Electoral Volatility (Pederson 1983; Bartolini and Mair, 1990; Morlino 1998, 85). This index measures the net change in the vote shares of all parties from one election to the next (total electoral volatility, TEV). In stable party systems, the volatility index records little voter vacillation between parties and thus usually remains at low levels. In contrast, unstable party systems record high rates of volatility. They not only facilitate volatile voting behavior, but additionally, the party organizations themselves are in a constant flux, i.e. electoral volatility is also an indicator for the institutionalization of political parties (Mainwaring 1998; Levitsky 1998; Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). Figure 6 shows the mean total electoral volatility in terms of vote shares for each election and the mean TEV.

Figure 6: Total Electoral Volatility (Pedersen Index of Electoral Volatility)

Note: Pedersen's index of electoral volatility is used here. This index is derived by adding the net change in the percentage of votes gained or lost by each party form one election to the next, then dividing by two (Pedersen, 1983). It is impossible to measure the electoral volatility in the Philippines because of the lack of data and the frequent party-switching of party candidates which take place on electoral and parliamentary scenes.

As we would expect, there is no universal pattern of electoral volatility in Southeast Asia. Volatility has been low in Malaysia, moderate in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Taiwan, high in Thailand and Mongolia, and very high in Korea and East Timor. While space does not permit an elaborated discussion, the evidence presented supports the assumption shared by many scholars that the linkage between voters and political parties in many East Asian countries and institutionalization of political parties and party systems is weak. This conclusion is also supported by studies which analyze party-voter linkages ('partisanship') in East Asian democracies, using the CSES 30-nation dataset. The findings of these studies display generally low levels of partisanship (Sheng 2007, 372; Chu et al. 2007).

The discussion thus far has made it clear that electoral systems and electoral reforms have, at least in part, an impact on the party systems in East Asia. It is, however, mostly limited to party system fragmentation. But regarding other characteristics of party politics such as the institutionalization of political parties and party systems or the pattern of inter-party competition, electoral reform seems not to matter much.

There are other reasons why we should not overestimate the impact of electoral engineering on party systems in East Asia, and especially on political party reform. For instance, impressionistic evidence of the ideological differences between political parties in East Asian party systems and systematic examinations of public perceptions of party positions on a left-right scale in a number of East Asian nations (e.g. South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and the Philippines) demonstrate that conflict in these new party systems is not ideology based. The patterns of party competition are not reflected in left-right positions. The impact of ideological differences appears secondary to parties' electoral calculations and the opportunistic strategizing of candidates or party leaders (Dalton/Tanaka 2007). The

clearest cases are the Philippines and Thailand, where in the past candidates and representatives frequently changed parties, where political parties rise and disappear like soap bubbles and where it is not uncommon for parties to form or leave alliances and even government coalitions as party elites thought best (Croissant 2002b). As Laura Thornton describes, 'in general, political parties in Thailand are not based on ideology. Party leaders prefer the flexibly to adjust to the immediate interests of voters during the campaign. Consequently, it is often difficult to distinguish the policies of one party form another. Major parties do not differ fundamentally in political and economic programs and ideological orientations. Party switching is also widespread, so even if a party articulates a central ideology, it is unlikely that all party members adhere to that ideology' (Thornton 2003, 390). It is highly likely, hence, that the parties' strategic electoral choices in how they present themselves to voters will be more influential than institutional reforms and, thus it is unlikely that institutional reforms can produce the types of political parties and party systems that reformers have in mind. Parties may choose to converge in proportional systems as, for instance, in Cambodia; and they may choose to diverge in majoritarian electoral systems like in the Philippines or South Korea.

(3) Electoral Systems and Government Formation

As mentioned before, a major motivation for electoral reform and institutional engineering in East Asia was to encourage political aggregation and to minimize the risk of political fragmentation by restricting the electoral prospects of small parties. This, so reformers hoped, would also promote more stable and cohesive political majorities, which in turn, would enhance the ability of party governments to govern. Because plurality or mixed-member-majoritarian systems would squeeze the number of political parties, thus reducing party system fragmentation, and simultaneously change the balance of power between candidates and their political parties in favor of the party organization and party leaders, electoral reforms would promote stable patterns of cabinet formation, and generate coherent and decisive political majorities in the legislature and the executive office.

Cross-national studies seem to support this argument. In his study on patterns of democracy in 24 countries, Lijphart (1984) demonstrated that plurality or majority electoral system models tend to manufacture legislative majorities, thus making cabinet formation in parliamentary systems easier. Taylor and Herman (1971), Lijphart (1984) Powell (1982), Laver and Schofield (1990) and King et al. (1990) also found a strong inverse correlation between party system fragmentation, government stability and cabinet durability.

A quick glance at the Thai experience before and after 1997 lends this argument credibility too. Before 1997, party system fragmentation allowed weak, smaller parties to join unwieldy post-election coalition governments that never lasted a complete term and undermined the aim of government stability and effectiveness. After 1997, the situation totally changed when in the 2001 election the 32.1 percent of nationwide votes garnered by Thai Rak Thai party in the constituency-based election translated into 49.8 percent of seats in the parliament (Croissant and Pojar 2005). As James Ockey (2003) explains, this "gave the Thai Rak Thai party unprecedented bargaining power in forming a coalition, choosing a cabinet, and in pushing its policies through parliament". Before 2001, vertical centralization of political power and control of public resources, horizontal dispersion of discretionary power between government ministries and agencies and the factionalized nature of Thai party politics – weak internal coherence of parties because

of multilayered factionalism and low cohesion of national coalitions because of the heterogeneous nature of oversized multi-party cabinets - provided strong incentives for the rise of a fragmented, factionalized, highly competitive and weakly polarized multiparty system (Hicken, 2005, 12-13). The previous electoral system (plurality rule in multimember constituencies with multiple voting) further reinforced those tendencies. Constitutional reforms in 1997, however, eliminated some of those incentives; simultaneously, TRT adopted a new strategy of coalition-building. Instead of coalition-building after the election, the party merged with many smaller but well established parties which strengthened its political networks and electoral machines at the constituency level. Thus, fragmentation and competition, at least in part, shifted from inter-party politics to intra-party politics (Chambers, 2005).

According to Douglas W. Rae, the impact of electoral systems on the patterns of government formation can be measured by looking at their capacity to produce so-called manufactured majorities (Rae 1967, 67). A majority is 'manufactured' when a party wins a minority of votes but the majority of seats. It may be contrasted with earned majorities, where a party wins majorities of both votes and seats, and with natural minorities, where no party wins a majority of either votes or seats.

Table 5:   Majoritarian capacity of parliamentary election systems

	Manufactured majorities	Earned majorities	Natural minorities
Cambodia (1993-2003)	2	--	1
East Timor (2001-2007)	--	1	1
Indonesia (1999-2004)	--	--	2
Mongolia (1992-2004)	1	2	1
Malaysia (1959-2004)	1	10	--
Philippines (1987-1998)*	1	--	3
Singapore (1968-2006)	--	10	--
South Korea (1988-2004)	1	--	4
Taiwan (1992-2004)	2	1	2
Thailand			
1992-1996	--	--	3
2001-2005	--	1	1
Total (N = 50)	8 (16%)	25 (50%)	17 (34%)
Total excluding Singapore and Malaysia (N = 29)	7 (24%)	5 (17%)	17 (59%)

* The Philippine Commission of Election (COMELEC) has not yet released aggregated national number of votes for individual parties of the 2001, 2004 and 2007 Congressional Elections. Source: Croissant, 2002a and 2006.

As Table 5 shows, there is considerable variation in both manufactured and earned majorities in East Asia. At one end the capacity of the electoral system to 'manufacture' single-party majorities is weak in pre-reform Thailand, Indonesia, and South Korea. Regarding Indonesia and Thailand this is no surprise: both combine strong proportionality and little over-representation of the leading party. However, the finding for South Korea is somewhat surprising given the voting system in use and its relatively high disproportionality. At the other end, plurality systems such as in Singapore, Malaysia and Mongolia regularly feature one-party majorities. But these, at least in most elections, are not manufactured but earned single-party majorities. In fact, it is only in Cambodia (PR system) and Taiwan before 2007 (SNTV) where manufactured majorities are more than deviant outcomes. In other words: there is no clear line that divides the Asian plurality systems from the PR systems with regard to their capacity to generate single-party majorities. When semi-democracies like Singapore and Malaysia are excluded from the sample, the overall capacity of the region's plurality and mixed-member systems to 'manufacture' single-party majorities or to promote earned majorities is not impressive at all.

Of course, one-party majorities, either earned or manufactured, are not the only instrument to promote stable and effective government. The capacity of coalition cabinets to enforce legislation is not automatically inferior to one-party cabinets. On the contrary, coalition cabinets are sometimes more effective in promoting policies because they may count on broader support. Arend Lijphart, for example, argues that successful policy making in general and economic policy making in particular requires not so much a strong hand, as a steady one (1984, 156). Policy continuity, however, needs cabinet durability. Short-lived cabinets do not have sufficient time to develop sound policies; conversely, high cabinet durability indicates that cabinets are able to command stable support in parliament; it also indicates that the government is capable to discipline their party representatives and to enforce its own policy agenda in the legislature (Lijphart, 1999, 129). Cabinet durability is also the result of various factors such as the majoritarian effect of electoral systems, the degree of fragmentation of party systems, the level of polarization, the electoral volatility, and the type of government (parliamentary, presidential or 'mixed systems').

The following data are calculations based on a narrow definition of cabinet duration. Three criteria are used for the termination of a cabinet. The life-span of a cabinet ends in the case of new elections, or changes in the party composition of cabinets or if the person of the Prime Minister has changed (or president in presidential systems such as Indonesia and the Philippines). Unfortunately, we have sufficient data to calculate mean cabinet durability only for five East Nations – Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Table 6: Cabinet durability, aggregation and legislative representation (as of January 2006)

	Cabinet Durability6		Seat share of the party of the PM or President8	
	Average	As of January 2006	Average	As of January 2006
Cambodia1	28	18	52.5	59.3
Indonesia2	18.2	16	17.5	10.5
Malaysia3	37.3	21	N/A	49.7 (90.8)9
Philippines4	47.5	19	40.710	40.0
Thailand5	14.25	--5	33.9	75.2

Note: 1 CPP/FUNCIPEC I (1993-1997); CPP I (1997-1998); CPP/FUNCIPEC II (1998-2003); CPP II (caretaker government, 2003-2004); CPP/FUNCIPEC III (since July 2004). 2 Wahid I (1999-2000); Wahid II (2000-2001); Megawati (2001-2004); Yudhono (since September 2004); 3,Tunku II (1959-1964); Tunku III (1964-1969); Tunku IV (1969-1970); Abdul I (1970-1974); Abdul II (1974-1976); Hussein I (1976-1978); Hussein II (1978-1981); Mahatir I (1981-1982); Mahatir II (1982-1986); Mahatir III (1986-1990); Mahatir IV (1990-1995); Mahatir V (1995-1999), Mahatir VI (1999-2003); Badawi I (2003-2004); Badawi II (since April 2004). 4 Aquino (1986-1992); Ramos (1992-1998); Estrada (1998-2001); Arroyo I (2001-2004); Arroyo II (since June 2004). 5 Value for Thailand has been calculated from September 1992 to September 2006: Chuan I (1992-1994); Chuan II (1994-1994); Chuan III (1994-1995); Banharn (1995-1996); Chavalit (1996-1997); Chuan IV (1997-1998); Chuan V (1998-1999); Chuan VI (1999-2001); Thaksin I (2001-2005); Thaksin II (March 2005 to March 2006); Caretaker government of Deputy Prime Minister Chidchai Wannasathit (April 2006-May 2006); Thaksin IV (June 2006-September 2006). 6 As of January 2006, in month. 7 We calculated the cabinet aggregation by the dividing percentage of the seats controlled by the strongest government party by the number of coalition parties. 8 Seats share of the party of Prime Minister (parliamentary system) or President (presidential system). 9 First value for UMNO, second value for BN.10 Only 1987-2001. 11 Value for the last elected government of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

There is, at least in these five nations, a clear correlation between party system fragmentation and cabinet durability in parliamentary systems. As expected, Malaysia ranks highest among the parliamentary systems, followed by Cambodia and Thailand where, before 2001, party system fragmentation was high, the electoral system neither favoured the strongest party nor produced manufactured majorities and the level of aggregation of political power within oversized coalitions of five to seven parties was low. Following the 2001 election, however, cabinet durability increased as a consequence of the shift from fractious multiparty coalitions to single party cabinet.

In regard to Indonesia and the Philippines, the lower than expected durability rate of governments and the lack of legislative majorities for the party of the president point to some critical 'perils' of presidentialism in both Indonesia and the Philippines. In each of the two cases, a president found himself or herself facing a crisis of legitimacy that featured impeachment of President Wahid and President Estrada in 2001 and the beginning of impeachment proceedings against President Arroyo in 2005, though eventually blocked by the President's majority in Congress. Furthermore, in both Indonesia and the Philippines presidents are bereft of an own legislative majority, and often lack the power to enact their own legislative agenda. Minority presidents which are difficult to remove from office, policy gridlock, the election of inexperienced outsiders (e.g., Joseph Estrada, Abdurrahman Wahid), and fractious coalition cabinets are associated with serious problems of governance in both Indonesia and the Philippines. Many critics, particularly in the Philippines, lambaste these issues to the very nature of presidentialism. Thus, in recent years several politicians, social activist and academics alike have argued in favour of a shift to a parliamentary system (Rüland, 2003). But it is

especially in Indonesia that, as a result of divided government and the weaknesses of parties, democracy has frequently experienced legislative-executive stalemate and policymaking logjams, generating what has been termed 'deadlocked democracy', or a crisis of governability (Fukuyama, Dressel, and Chang 2005; Qodari, 2005)8.

V.   Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, in the last two decades many East Asian reformers, and especially reforms in Thailand, were inclined to believe that electoral engineering was an adequate way to overcome problems of fragmented multiparty-ism, weak institutionalization of political parties and party systems, and unwieldy and unstable multiparty-coalition governments (in case of the region's parliamentary systems).

Part I of this paper has considered fundamental challenges for democratic governance in East Asia's Neo-Democracies. Part II briefly summarized various electoral institutions used across East Asia and described the process of electoral reform experienced by many countries during the last decade. Part III discussed the consequences of electoral systems for party system, and in particular whether there is convincing evidence that the adoption of particular electoral systems has either an impact on representation, the fragmentation of party systems and the pattern of party competition, or the process of government formation.

What are the findings and what are the implications for debates about electoral reform in the context of the East Asian Neo-Democracies? Overall the results of the comparison of elections in East Asian nations, and the detailed analysis of the impact of electoral systems on party systems support four main conclusions:

The results support Duverger's generalization about the reductive mechanical effect of the basic electoral formula. Plurality electoral systems and mixed-member majoritarian systems tend towards party dualism, while PR is associated with multi-partyism. Nevertheless, there are important cross-national differences within each of the electoral families, as the relationship between electoral systems and party systems is conditional upon many factors, specific features of electoral design such as the use of thresholds and the size of districts, other institutional factors, the strength or weakness of party-voter-linkages; and the number and depth of social cleavages within a nation. Small-to-medium-size parties can do well in gaining seats under first-past-the-post, especially regional or ethnic-national parties with spatially concentrated support (Korea, the Philippines), while at the same time minor parties can also be heavily penalized in proportional systems that have high thresholds and small district magnitudes (i.e. Cambodia). In other words: overall, institutional reformers in East Asia (including Thailand) were right when they thought that they could use electoral formula to manipulate the fragmentation of party systems.

These reforms, however, had a diminishing effect on political representation and social inclusiveness. As the analysis shows, electoral reform produced substantial distortion in the proportionality of vote-seat relations, thereby creating a seat bonus for leading parties, simultaneously producing poorer representation and more pronounced lack of inclusiveness.

The indicators of the capacity of the election to generate a working majority include the vote and seat share for the leading party (e.g., overrepresentation). The findings confirm, as expected, that plurality and mixed-member majoritarian systems produce strong overrepresentation of the leading party. However, and somewhat contrary to what we would expect, in more than 50 percent of all elections in East Asian Neo-Democracies (e.g. excluding Singapore and Malaysia), the party in first place generally failed to gain a majority of votes or seats. Or to put it another way: even though disproportionality is strong and seat bonuses for leading parties are large in plurality and mixed-member majoritarian systems, the capacity of these systems to provide a decisive outcome and single-party majorities is relatively weak. This has, at least in part, an impact on the patterns of government formation, the durability of cabinets and the ability of the executive offices to provide strong, decisive and effective leadership.

Last but not least, the findings of this study lend the weakest confirmation to support the assumption that electoral engineering is a useful tool to manufacture a new type of political parties and more stable and better institutionalized party systems. On the one hand, there is little evidence regarding the psychological effects of electoral systems in fostering strong voter-party linkages. In addition institutionalization of party systems in most East Asian 'Neo-Democracies' is still weak, as high electoral volatility rates indicate. On the other hand, the analysis demonstrates that most East Asian nations have experienced multiple party systems since democratization. Most East Asian party systems neither discern the symptoms of stabilization nor of destabilization. Conversely, the data suggest the 'freezing' of the party systems in a status of protracted non-consolidation.

What are the implications of these results for debates about electoral reform in Thailand? In the past, reformers believed that electoral change can contribute towards better governance. What they had hoped for was a settled and aggregative party system, a stronger policy-orientation of candidates, political parties and voters, and more stable, cohesive and efficient party government. In other words: political reformers had hoped that electoral engineering would promote the development of a better democratic system in Thailand. What they got was Thaksinocracy. As mentioned before, one might say the electoral model has worked too well, 'producing' all the consequences which are regarded problematic in the literature on the relationship between majoritarian electoral formula and political party systems. As I understand, the new constitution will eliminate the electoral system established in 1997. The mixed-member majoritarian system will make way for a complicated population-weighted system under which more populous constituencies get more MPs. The new lower-house electoral systems restores a version of the old MNTV system (1 - 3 seats each) but will not be quite a restoration of the pre-1997 system. Rather, I understand that there will be a list tier, as well: 400 seats in the nominal tier and 80 in the list tier (with no separate list vote and, I believe, a ban on dual candidacy). Unlike the 1997-2006 system, the list tier is itself regional, rather than a single national district. Viewed from an outside perspective, this system seems to be custom-made to prevent the re-emergence of single-party (or single-leader) dominance in the electoral arena; it certainly is more favourable to the old pre-Thaksin regional political elites. If these information is correct, the new electoral system can lead to quite distinctive outcomes compared with the post-1997 voting system. One might expect a comeback of many of features of the pre-1997 electoral politics, such as multi-partyism with a balance among the parties and multi-party coalition cabinets.

What the consequence of the new electoral system will be and if it can have an impact on the fundamental problems of democratic governance in Thailand remains to be seen. I would appreciate your opinion on this issue.

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Appendix

Table 1: Siaroff Classification of Party Systems

	PS3%S	2PSC	SR1:2	SR2:3
Cambodia 1993	3	89,3	1,13	5,86
Cambodia 1998	3	87,6	1,48	2,88

Cambodia 2003	3	80,4	2,81	1,08
Cambodia mean	3	85,76	1,80	3,27
East Timor 2001	4	70,45	7,85	1,16
East Timor 2007	4	60	1,16	1,63
East Timor mean	4	65,22	4,50	1,39
Indonesia 1999	5	59,9	1,27	1,17
Indonesia 2004	7	43,09	1,17	1,87
Indonesia mean	6	51,49	1,22	1,52
Philippines 1987	7	33,5	1,79	1,04
Philippines 1992	6	63,3	2,14	1,33
Philippines 1995	5	61,3	3,98	1,13
Philippines 1998	4	80,9	1,99	3,69
Philippines 2001	4	55,1	1,85	1,91
Philippines 2004	4	54,4	1,41	1,55
Philippines mean	5	58,08	2,19	1,77
South Korea 1988	4	65,2	1,78	1,18
South Korea 1992	3	82,2	1,53	3,1
South Korea 1996	4	72,9	1,75	1,58
South Korea 2000	3	90,8	1,15	6,76
South Korea 2004	4	90,9	1,25	12,1
South Korea mean	3,6	80,4	1,492	4,94
Taiwan 1992	2	90	1,86	0
Taiwan 1995	3	84,7	1,57	2,57
Taiwan 1998	3	85,8	1,75	6,34
Taiwan 2001	4	68,88	1,27	1,47
Taiwan 2004	4	74,66	1,12	2,32
Taiwan mean	3,2	80,80	1,51	2,54
Thailand 1992	6	43,3	1,02	1,28
Thailand 1995	8	43,5	1,06	1,5
Thailand 1996	6	63,1	1,01	2,37
Thailand mean	6,66	49,96	1,03	1,71
Thailand 2001	5	75,2	1,97	3,12
Thailand 2005	3	94,6	3,9	3,84
Thailand mean	4	84,9	2,93	3,48
Mongolia 1992	2	97,4	17,37	0
Mongolia 1996	2	98,8	2	0

Mongolia 2000	1	94,7	0	0
Mongolia 2004	2	93,4	1,08	0
Mongolia mean	1,75	96,07	5,11	0
Singapore 1968	1	100	0	0
Singapore 1972	1	100	0	0
Singapore 1976	1	100	0	0
Singapore 1980	1	100	0	0
Singapore 1984	1	97,5	0	0
Singapore 1988	1	98,8	0	0
Singapore 1991	2	95,1	25,6	0
Singapore 1997	1	97,6	0	0
Singapore 2001	1	97,6	0	0
Singapore 2006	1	97,6	0	0
Singapore mean	1	98,42	--	0
Malaysia 1959	4	83,7	5,7	1,6
Malaysia 1964	2	94,3	9,8	4,6
Malaysia 1969	8	61,8	5,9	1,1
Malaysia 1974	3	93,5	15,1	9,7
Malaysia 1978	3	94,8	8,1	3,3
Malaysia 1982	4	91,5	14,7	1,1
Malaysia 1986	2	97,2	6,1	5,9
Malaysia 1990	5	81,7	6,4	1,4
Malaysia 1995	3	89,1	17,9	1,1
Malaysia 1999	3	89,1	5,6	2,4
Malaysia 2004	3	95,8	16,5	1,7
Malaysia mean	3,63	88,40	10,16	3,08

Endnotes

[1] Especially in plural societies with deep cultural, ethnic or socio-economic cleavages, such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, plurality elections obstruct social integration and contain an institutional potential for exacerbating social and ethnic conflicts. The British historian and political scientist W. A. Lewis, for example, noted that 'the surest way to kill the idea of democracy in a plural society is to adopt the Anglo-American electoral system of first-past-the-post' (Lewis 1982, 71). Arend Lijphart (1999) argues that the majoritarian model (including plurality electoral systems) is inadequate for plural societies because 'the flexibility necessary for majoritarian democracy is likely to be absent'. Majoritarianism in plural societies is compatible with political stability only if two basic requirements are fulfilled. First, the status of political minority and political majority alternates so that no single group in a society feels to be

excluded forever from political decision-making; and second, the differentiation between political majority and minority does not reinforce social cleavages and political polarization. Rarely does any society meet both conditions.

[2] For the debate whether mixed-member electoral models constitute a third group of electoral systems or must be submitted into the two basic types of PR and plurality systems see Nohlen (forthcoming) and Shugart and Wattenberg (2001a).

[3] Singapore deviated from this inherited system in 1988 when parliament passed an amendment to the electoral law that introduced additional block voting in Group Representative Constituencies (GRCs) of between 5 and 6 seats (Hwee 2002, 208-9).

[4] The computation of the index (G) is as follows: the difference between the vote percentages (vi) and seat percentages (si) for each party are squared and then added. This total is divided by 2; and finally the square root of this value is taken. Adding the index value for each election and dividing the total by the number of elections displays the average seat-vote deviation for all parties at all elections.

[5] For detailed critique see Dunleavy and Boucek, 2003; Caulier and Dumont, 2004.