Ticket splitting, strategic voting and personal vote in the 2012 Mongolian elections

Pavel Maškarinec

Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem, Department of Political Science and Philosophy, Czech Republic

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A B S T R A C T

This article examines ticket splitting under Mongolia's new mixed-member majoritarian system used for the elections in 2012, reaching several conclusions. First, we confirm that strategic ticket splitting depends on party size, as especially candidates of larger parties receive, on average, more district votes. Second, we show that strategic voting is not a universal phenomenon under the Mongolian mixed-member majoritarian system. Finally, as personal vote rather than strategic voting generally influences electoral behaviour of Mongolian voters at the district level, we hypothesize that institutional factors alone are not sufficient to explain both ticket splitting and strategic voting.

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1. Introduction

Mixed electoral systems that provide voters with two ballots (combining plurality election in single-member or small multi-member districts with proportional representation) have recently gained substantial attention, as increasing number of countries adopted this type of electoral laws in the 1990s and 2000s. Furthermore, the possibility that voters in the mixed systems can cast two votes, each with different logic and impact on representation of political parties, provides good opportunities to study underlying effects of electoral systems which create incentives for voters and candidates to act strategically, resulted in so-called ticket splitting. As Maurice Duverger (1954) described in his famous distinction between mechanical and psychological effects, it is a rational reaction of voters in single-member districts (SMDs) to defect from a nonviable district candidate in favour of the ideologically closest viable candidate, in contrast to proportional representation (PR) under which voters have only few reasons to defect from their preferred candidate.

With mixed systems emerging since the 1990s, a related debate regarding the size and determinants of strategic voting and ticket splitting has developed. Thus, in the case of Japan, Reed (1999) found strong evidence of strategic voting, as candidates with real chances of winning a seat received more votes in SMDs than in PR, while the opposite was true for candidates of small parties. Similarly, Bawn (1999) confirmed that German voters react strategically in SMDs, voting for major-party candidates, or for such candidates expected to be in government. Karp et al. (2002) found evidence of strategic voting in New Zealand, especially among voters with higher levels of political knowledge. Moser and Scheiner (2005), in their analysis covering five different mixed-member electoral systems, then argued that personal vote was the central reason behind ticket splitting in most countries except Germany, where they found substantial evidence for strategic voting and only
weak personal vote. Contrarily, Schoen (1999) showed that less than half of German voters split their tickets in a completely rational manner. Finally, Rich (2014b), in his analysis of South Korea’s elections, confirmed that supporters of smaller parties are more likely to split their tickets following specific institutional incentives of the electoral system.

This article aims to evaluate ticket splitting in one of the recently introduced mixed systems. Mongolia recently followed its East Asian counterparts and implemented a new mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) system for parliamentary elections. More importantly, the outcome of the election held under this system on 28 June 2012 resulted in at least tentative disruption of the bipolarisation of Mongolian party politics (Maskarinec, 2014). The following questions thus emerge: Are we seeing district outcomes consistent with the theoretical considerations of strategic voting? Or are the levels of ticket splitting for individual candidates showing varied (changing) effects of strategic voting according to final ranking of individual candidates? And if so, how important are the different explanatory factors for the difference between vote for each party’s district candidates and for the party in proportional representation in the same district (so-called vote gap)? Are there more important factors associated with the assumptions of strategic voting, or ones associated with the personality of individual candidates (personal vote), or are there other (contextual) country-specific factors playing a role?

This paper is organized as follows. First, we briefly review the existing formal literature on strategic voting and ticket splitting. In the second part, a brief introduction to the Mongolian case follows. In the third part, the data and methods of analysis are introduced. In the fourth part, a descriptive analysis and a regression analysis of ticket splitting are presented, and then the concluding section formulates some implications of the results for further research.

2. Theoretical framework: strategic voting and ticket splitting

As a starting point, when reviewing the literature on electoral competition and strategic voting, one can mention Duverger’s (1954) classical proposition that plurality rule can create two-party competition. This expectation is based on two underlying effects (mechanical and psychological), which create incentives for voters and candidates to act strategically. Thus, under the condition of perfect strategic co-ordination by both parties and voters, Duverger predicted the number of parties or candidates (at district level) to be two in plurality rule systems. The Duvergerian logic thus assumes that voters are short-term instrumentally rational, concerned only about affecting the outcome of the current legislative election (Singer, 2013: 203). Therefore, it is possible to describe Duverger’s law as an equilibrium that is reached only over a series of elections (Gaines, 1999: 837). In repeated elections, provided that all voters and parties act perfectly strategically, the equilibrium will emerge in that only two candidates receive all the votes and the votes obtained by the third and following candidates approximate zero.

Moser and Scheiner (2005: 260) define strategic voting as ‘casting ballots for alternatives other than one’s first preference in order to improve the expected outcome of the election.’ Strategic voting is thus indicated by the presence of voters who desert their preferred (small) parties (candidates), if they have only limited chances to gain a seat in an SMD, in favour of less preferred parties (candidates) with real chances to succeed (Cox, 1997). Similarly, parties can act strategically by not nominating candidates, or by joining other parties or coalitions, in districts where they traditionally have only limited support.

However, even existing two-party competition at the district level does not lead automatically to two-party competition at the aggregate (national) level. To the contrary, nationwide two-party competition is possible, as voters may think strategically not just about the local level but also about the national level, for instance with regard to the question of who will form the government (Gaines, 1999: 837–838). This may, in the next step, lead to other forms of equilibrium if a party with considerable support elsewhere in the country is willing to nominate candidates even in districts without a real chance to win a seat, in order to strengthen before voters its image as a nationwide party. Similarly, if there exist incentives to form multipartism at other levels of government in the country (for instance, proportional representation at sub-national levels), voters may be willing to vote for nationwide parties with limited support at the district level, which they should strategically abandon (Singer, 2013: 204–205).

In this context, mixed systems pose a new challenge to test both strategic voting and ticket splitting with respect to Duverger’s expectations due to the co-existence of SMDs and PR. While some authors, for instance Shugart and Wattenberg (2001), expected independence of both tiers used for allocating seats, others, for instance Herron and Nishikawa (2001), Ferrara et al. (2005) or Rich (2014a), pay attention to a contaminating effect of PR. As the list tier allows representation of approximate zero.

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2 While the mechanical effect concerns how votes are translated into seats, the psychological effect consists of candidates’ and voters’ response to the working of the mechanical effect.

3 Duverger’s law predicts that ‘the simple-majority single-ballot system favours the two-party system’ (Duverger, 1954: 217), while Duverger’s hypothesis claims that ‘both the simple-majority system with second ballot and proportional representation favour multi-partism’ (Duverger, 1954: 239).
However, Rich (2014a) pointed to the necessity of distinguishing between various types of mixed systems with respect to potential mechanical and behavioural differences between them. While in mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) systems (for example, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) the two formulas (list and nominal tier) are used independently of each other, in mixed-member proportional (MMP) systems (for example, Germany, New Zealand, Scotland) the election outcome in one tier is dependent on the outcome that is produced by the other tier (Massicotte and Blais, 1999: 346–361).

According to Rich (2014a), we can expect that electoral competition under the MMM will closely resemble the Duvergerian logic, as MMM systems tend to concentrate much more on district competition, whereas electoral contest under MMP systems will create a contaminating effect due to greater emphasis on proportionality. Contrarily, Rich (2015), in his analysis covering 90 mixed systems in 23 countries between 1990 and 2012, concluded that the distinction between MMM and MMP systems alone poorly explains the variation in district results and although MMM districts generally have fewer candidates, other factors also have direct influence on district competition (fused ballots, the electoral threshold for PR, the existence of compulsory voting), potentially distorting the Duvergerian logic and signalling a departure from Duverger’s law.

Furthermore, Reed (1990) pointed to the uncertain psychological foundations of the assumption of short-term instrumental rationality, namely that voters will correctly analyse the situation and maximize their self-interest. Their rational decisions are limited as party preferences are typically known at national, rather than district level; learning, rather than rationality, then connects structure and behaviour (Reed, 1990: 336). This is very important, as that the effect of strategic voting is expected to work just at the district level. Without knowing the different candidates’ preferences, voters are unable to make a plausible judgment as to who of the top two ‘losers’ in a race (second- or third-place candidates in plurality vote) is the principal challenger, and thus who should obtain their strategic vote. As a result, supporters of the third-place candidate will face little incentive to cast their vote elsewhere, which leads to a non-Duvergerian equilibrium.

As well as strategic voting, voters’ ticket-splitting decisions arise from the assumption of short-term instrumental rationality. For instance, Rich (2012: 206) defines ticket splitting as ‘a deliberate strategic act, intended to maximize one’s influence on the election.’ As such, ticket splitting requires some level of comprehension of the electoral system. Therefore, there are only very limited incentives for larger political parties to encourage ticket splitting, as well as for their supporters to perform this measure, and ticket splitting is largely limited to supporters of smaller parties (Rich, 2012, 2014b). Bawn (1999) and Reed (1990) then argued that level of ticket splitting increases with voters’ preference of incumbents or major party candidates with real chances to enter the government, or with the closeness of race between major party candidates.

However, Moser and Scheiner (2005) stressed the importance of analysing personal vote as a factor that can yield results in a similar fashion as ticket splitting does. The authors define personal vote as ‘additional SMD votes cast for a candidate due to the candidate’s personal appeal to voters rather than his or her strategic behaviour.’ (Moser and Scheiner, 2005: 259) Similarly, Bawn (1999) stressed the importance of the fact that personal vote may result from personal qualities and activities of candidates in contrast to their partisan affiliation. For that reason, Moser and Scheiner (2005) advocate the use of vote margin or closeness of race, that is, the difference between the votes for the first- and second-place candidates in an SMD, as a proxy to distinguish between strategic voting and protest vote. So, while personal vote is indicated by high values of both closeness of race and the SMD-PR vote gap (due to the fact that highly popular candidates dominate competition and at the same time receive many more SMD votes than their parties do PR votes), strategic voting is indicated by high values of the SMD-PR vote gap together with much lower values of closeness of race, as there is no reason for rational or strategic voters to cast more votes for the winner candidate when the race is not so close (Moser and Scheiner, 2005: 262–264).

At the same time, the importance of analysing ticket splitting considering both strategic voting and personal vote is not contrary to Duverger’s expectations. Even Duverger’s original work operated with the assumption that the electoral system is not the only (exclusive) determinant of the number of parties. As pointed out by Clark and Golder (2006: 680), in spite of being referred to as the father of the so-called institutionalist approach, Duverger clearly articulated the way in which social and institutional variables interact. Scholars often ignore his argument that the number of political parties is not determined primarily by electoral systems (institutional structure) but by social-economic factors (social structure). Therefore, although electoral rules (or institutions) play an important role for Duverger, it is rather social heterogeneity which is the primary driving force behind the multiplication of parties. Electoral arrangements then only act as a modifier, translating the effect of social forces into the exact number of political parties (Clark and Golder, 2006: 704).

3. Mongolia’s electoral history

Since its democratization in 1990 (Fish, 2001; Fritz, 2002; Aagaard Seeberg, 2018), Mongolia has held seven elections (1992–2016) to its unicameral parliament — the Great State Khural. However, despite frequent changes in electoral laws, most of the types of electoral systems used in Mongolia tended to exaggerate disproportionality and favour the larger parties.

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4 In most mixed electoral systems, voters have two votes, casting one in a plurality-majoritarian part of the system—nominal tier—and the other one in a proportional part—list tier (Massicotte and Blais, 1999).

5 In contrast, according to Cox (1997: 79), the short-term instrumentally rational voters were one out of three ways strategic voting can potentially lead to bipartism, next to reasonably accurate and publicly available information on candidate standings, and myopic (‘price-taking’) adjustment.

6 According to Moser and Scheiner (2005: 261), the following example can demonstrate the effects of personal rather than strategic vote. When a second-place candidate receives a large number of personal votes, he could: a) find him/herself in a closer race with the front-runner; and/or b) receive a markedly larger number of SMD votes than his/her party in PR.
In 1992, when the first democratic constitution was adopted, Mongolia employed so-called unlimited vote, that is, a system with a tendency to highly disproportional election outcomes. The election results then confirmed the expectations attributed to this system, as the ruling post-communist Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (MPRP) captured 70 out of 76 seats (92.11%) with 56.90% of the vote, while the main opposition parties gained only five seats despite their combined vote share of 27.57%; the one remaining seat was captured by an independent candidate (Agwaandorjiin, 1999: 212—231).

For 1996, 2000 and 2004, a specific modification of the two-round system (TRS) (plurality-majority) was used in the SMDs, with a required plurality of at least 25% of the vote for first-round victory. The TRS once again resulted in a high level of disproportional, although its effect on the party system was primarily shaped by its current level of institutionalization. Indeed, MPRP’s clear success in 1992 triggered a process of concentration in what had been a highly fragmented opposition, and in contrast to previous elections in the elections of 1996 the MPRP was challenged by the election coalition of all major opposition parties (Democratic Alliance, DA). As a result, the post-communists lost their dominant position and the party system gained a potential to shift toward a bipolarity of the MPRP and the DA. The winning DA captured 50 out of 76 seats with 47.05% of the vote, while the incumbent MPRP won only 25 seats with 40.49% of the vote; the one remaining seat was captured by a candidate of a small party (Barkmann, 2005: 53—55).

However, fragmentation of the DA before the 2000 elections ended the tendency to a two-party system which had emerged after the 1996 elections. As a result, parties of the former government coalition experienced a bitter defeat, while the post-communist MPRP enjoyed a landslide victory and restored its dominant position, with 51.64% of the vote and 72 of a total of 76 seats (94.74%). In response, a new wave of concentration occurred in the party system, similarly as before the elections of 1996. By the end of the year, the Democratic Party (DP) was established by a merger of the MNDP, MSDP and some other minor parties. At the end of 2003, then, the DP formed an election coalition with two other parties entitled, Motherland—Democracy Coalition (MDC). Once again, like in the year 1996, also in the elections of 2004 the main opposition parties ran against the MPRP as a single coalition, and the elections outcome brought the party system closer to a two-party format (insofar as the MDC is viewed as a single contender). The winning MPRP captured 36 out of 76 seats with 48.83% of the vote, while the MDC won 34 seats with 44.85% of the vote (Schafferer, 2005: 742—746).

Neither did the reinstating of unlimited vote for the election of 2008 result in any major transformation of the Mongolian party system. The ruling MPRP achieved a clear victory, as the party was able to transform 43.06% of the vote to 45 seats, or 59.21%, while the DP obtained 39.21% of the vote but only 28 seats, or 36.84% (Maskarinec, 2017: 151). In short, the 2008 election results confirmed the party system’s tendency to bipartism and the fact that other parties needed to nominate highly popular candidates in order to achieve electoral success.

In contrast, an event of relevance to the party system’s institutionalization and the shape of interparty competition occurred in 2010. In November, the MPRP congress decided to rebrand the party to Mongolian People’s Party (MPP), the name under which the party was founded in 1921. Some members, however, disagreed, broke away and, in January 2011, formed a new party under the original name, MPRP, led by former Mongolian President Nambyn Enkhbayar. The outcome of the 2012 election, held under the new MMM system, then, demonstrated an at least tentative disruption of the bipolarisation of electoral politics in Mongolia, compared with previous elections (Maskarinec, 2014: 188). However, whereas in the past, the fragmentation of the party system was caused by the parties of the so-called ‘democratic camp’ and benefited the post-communists, the roles reversed in the election of 2012. The DP won 31 seats, an increase of 3 seats compared to 2008. In contrast, with 25 seats, the MPP (former MPRP) lost almost half of its seats from the previous election, although it maintained the position of the second largest parliamentary faction. The Justice Coalition ranked third with 11 seats, which amounted to a historical success because no other third party in Mongolia had won more than one seat since 1992 (Maskarinec, 2014: 187—188),

More importantly, while the election results under unlimited vote (1992, 2008) and the TRS (1996, 2000, 2004) showed that their reduction effects were the main force behind the party system’s structural concentration towards bipartism, the introduction of the MMM suggested a possible reorientation to multi-party system, for the first time in Mongolian history. At the same time, the nominal tier again demonstrated the importance of the urban-rural cleavage in Mongolia. While the nominal tier yielded the DP 10 seats in the countryside and 11 seats in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, the MPP won all their 16 district seats in the countryside. However, the trend toward multipartism was entirely interrupted in the following parliamentary elections of 2016, which were historical as their results dealt a complete defeat to the governing DP that had, shortly before the elections, driven a transformation of the electoral system from the MMM system used in the elections of 2012 to a first-past-the-post (FPTP)

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7 The DA electoral coalition was formed by the two strongest opposition parties, the Mongolian National Democratic Party (MNDP) and the Mongolian Social Democratic Party (MSDP), with support of two smaller parties, the Mongolian Green Party (MGP) and the Mongolian Believers’ Democratic Party (MBDP).
8 The MBDP, the Mongolian Democratic Party (MDP) and the Mongolian Democratic Renewal Party (MDRP).
9 The Motherland — Mongolian Democratic New Socialist Party (M-MDNSP) and the Civil Will — Republican Party (CWRP).
10 The Justice Coalition was formed in January 2012 by Enkhbayar’s MPRP and the Mongolian National Democratic Party (MNDP) headed by Mendsai-khany Enkhsaikhan — the first non-communist Prime Minister of Mongolia between 1996 and 1998 and a DP leader between 2003 and 2005.
11 The same was true for the presidential elections of 2013, whose outcomes confirmed the dominance of the DP in Ulaanbaatar. At the same time, the election results in the countryside clearly reflected the MPP’s split in 2011. If we sum the votes for MPP and MPRP candidates, the post-communists won absolute majority in most of the provinces, as well as overall in the countryside (Maskarinec, 2014: 189—190).
system. Although the difference between votes for the governing DP and the MPP, as the main opposition party, was about 12 percentage points (33.12%–45.09%), the DP suffered a disastrous defeat, with only 9 seats (11.84%) compared to 31 seats in 2012, while the MPP won 65 seats (85.52%), that is, more than two-and-a-half times more than in 2012. Furthermore, the MPPR received only one seat, compared to 11 seats of the Justice Coalition in the previous elections, and its result confirmed the complete disruption of the tendency to multiparty competition observed in the elections of 2012 and the emergence of one-party dominance together with an at least tentative disruption of the DP’s position as the system’s second-largest party and a credible government alternative to the MPP (Dierkes, 2017: 129–133; Radchenko and Jargalsaikhan, 2017: 1038–1049; Maskarinec, 2018: 515–525).

4. Data and methods

The basic data for this analysis consist of nationwide and district-level results of the 2012 elections in Mongolia as collected by the General Election Commission of Mongolia. We take different approaches to studying the extent of ticket splitting and strategic voting across both tiers of the Mongolian mixed system.

First, we analyse the character of electoral competition at the micro level using some descriptive statistics. At the basic level of districts, we simply present the position of parties in the electorate. As the urban-rural divide was a long-term characteristic of Mongolian electoral competition, we calculate the position of parties in the electorate not only for the nationwide level, but also separately for both provincial and capital city districts.

Second, we examine ticket splitting at the district level by defining candidate vote gap as difference between votes for each party’s candidates in a district and votes for her/his party in that district, both calculated as a percentage of the vote. We calculate that indicator for candidates of political parties who received representation in the parliament only, as other parties obtained only limited amounts of votes both in the districts and the PR tier. Similarly, independents are excluded from the analysis as they did not file PR lists, as well as most of the small parties which ran in the PR tier but ran only with few or no candidates in the districts. A positive vote gap indicates that the candidate did better than his party, while a negative vote gap means that candidate did worse.

Finally, we use multivariate regression analysis to find factors that may influence ticket splitting. Like Jesse (1988), Bawn (1999), Cox (1997), Reed (1999), or Moser and Scheiner (2005), our dependent variable (at the aggregate level of measurement) is the candidate vote gap as defined above. Our dataset consists of all party district candidates, but we do not include any candidate whose party did not file its own candidate list in the list tier and vice versa, giving us a total of 328 observations.

We use eight independent variables in an effort to find factors which can explain ticket splitting. In accordance with theoretical considerations, the variable incumbent is used to test for personal vote, indicating whether or not the party ran an incumbent in the given district in the nominal tier. As there is a commonly shared view that incumbent candidates have a substantial advantage over other candidates, we expect a positive effect of this variable. Strong personal vote should indicate that voters prefer especially personal characteristics when deciding among candidates (Moser and Scheiner, 2005: 268–270).

Other independent variables characterise district competition: rank, margin, and independent vote. The rank variable is simply the final rank order of votes for each candidate. Here, as the theory of strategic voting assumes that major-party candidates receive more district votes than candidates of small parties, we expect a negative effect of this variable.

The margin (1st to 2nd) variable is defined as difference between the vote shares of the two strongest candidates in the district. However, as Moser and Scheiner (2005) confirmed that strategic voting does not affect all candidates in the same way, we measure not only the vote margin between the front-runner and the first runner-up, but also the impact of margin on other candidates.

First, the margin (1st to xth) variable indicates the impact of margin on any candidate and is defined as difference between front-runner and any other candidate. Second, the margin (1st to bottom) variable indicates the impact of margin on the worst candidate and is defined as difference between the front-runner and the worst-ranking candidate in a given district. So, in the case of the margin (1st to 2nd) variable, negative values indicate strategic voting and positive values indicate personal vote. An opposite logic applies to the margin (1st to xth) and margin (1st to bottom) variables. Thus, positive effects of these two variables would be an indication of strategic voting, as poorly ranked candidates tend to lose more votes. Furthermore, like Reed (1999) and Moser and Scheiner (2005), we include the independent vote variable (proportion of votes received by independent candidates in a given district) with an expected negative effect on the vote gap.

Finally, we introduce two independent variables to control for specific institutional or contextual factors in Mongolia: district-size and urban-rural. As Mongolia does not use only SMDs in the nominal tier (district magnitudes range from one to three), we include district-size as a dummy variable coded 1 for SMDs and 0 for two-, or three-member districts. We expect a positive effect of the variable, as electoral competition in SMDs is expected to be more in conformity with the theoretical expectations of strategic voting. The urban-rural variable is introduced to capture the urban-rural cleavage that is very important for Mongolian electoral competition (as we mentioned above). The variable is coded 1 for districts in the provinces and 0 for districts in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. Here, as the MPP and the MPPR fought for one group of voters in the provinces (traditionally post-communist strongholds) in the elections of 2012, we expect a negative effect due to the splitting of the post-communist electorate.

The values of strategic voting will be reduced as voters might not be clear which of the top two post-communist candidates has a better chance in a race. Thus, we expect a negative, or ambiguous, effect, although most of the districts (20 out of 26, or 76.92%) are located in the provinces, including all six SMDs, and most of the seats (34 out of 48, or 70.83%) are
that candidates with a plurality of the districts (nominal tier) and the remaining 28 seats via proportional representation (list tier).

Mongolian version of the MMM system distributes the 76 seats by two mechanisms: 48 seats by plurality vote in 26 electoral districts, respectively than in multi-member districts.

of the previous electoral laws contributed to the structural concentration of the party system towards bipartism, which was not necessarily absolute majority obtained a mandate.

5. Empirical analysis

A previous analysis of strategic voting in Mongolia between 1996 and 2004 showed consistent, but not linear, movement towards the Duvergerian equilibrium, with a large part of the districts conforming to the Duverger norm of two-party competition (Maskarinec, 2017: 149–157). At the same time, the emergence of bipolar party politics in Mongolia was not an immediate process and will continue over a series of elections, supporting the so-called ‘learning hypothesis’ (Tavits and Annus, 2006). Furthermore, the main factor that limited Mongolian voters’ rationality, and created problems with their strategic ability to distinguish and abandon hopeless candidates, was weak institutionalization of the Mongolian party system (Maskarinec, 2017: 158). However, after several waves of concentration, as we have briefly shown above, the reduction effect of the previous electoral laws contributed to the structural concentration of the party system towards bipartism, which was not interrupted until the introduction of MMM for the elections in 2012.

In 2012, Mongolia used an electoral system that mixed key features of plurality vote and proportional representation. The Mongolian version of the MMM system distributes the 76 seats by two mechanisms: 48 seats by plurality vote in 26 electoral districts (nominal tier) and the remaining 28 seats via proportional representation (list tier).

The system worked as follows. Each voter cast two votes. The first votes (nominal tier) were totalled at the district level so that candidates with a plurality of the first votes won a seat. To obtain a mandate, a candidate had to win at least 28% of the vote, qualified plurality, or else a new election was held in the district. Since mandates in the nominal tier were distributed in single- to three-member districts, the system worked in somewhat different ways. On one hand, it worked like the FPTP in single-member districts, that is, the candidate with the most votes—not necessarily absolute majority—won. On the other hand, the system worked like unlimited vote in two- and three-member districts, that is, each voter had as many votes as the number of mandates in the district, and candidates with the most votes—again, not necessarily absolute majority—obtained a mandate.

The second votes (list tier) were totalled at the country level. Here, Mongolia used list proportional representation with a single district covering the entire country. Seats were distributed using the Hare quota largest remainder method, and a party or coalition that received at least 5% of the second votes nationwide received a fraction of seats proportional to its second-vote share.

Overall, not only did each elector under such a system have two sets of votes, one in a smaller plurality district and one in a large PR one, but there were also two sets of members of parliament, each elected under different rules. More importantly, as both the nominal and the list tier applied throughout the country, and operated independently of each other, the list tier was not able (since the ratio of mandates distributed in each tier of the electoral system was 63.2%—36.8% in favour of the nominal tier) to compensate smaller parties for their losses from the nominal tier due to Duverger’s mechanical effect. Here, one can expect some differences in voting between both MMM tiers, although this expectation depends largely on the rationality of voters’ behaviour resulting from different electoral incentives for the district and list candidates.

A simple analysis of the aggregated results of the elections of 2012 suggests a level of ticket splitting (See Table 1). As we expected, the two largest parties (especially the winning DP) captured a far higher share of the district seats than PR seats, despite little difference in the votes received in both tiers. In contrast, the share of the PR votes of two other parties which

| Party Representation and Vote Share (the 2012 Great State Khural Elections) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **List tier**               | **Nominal tier** | **Overall**     |
| **Votes (%)**               | **Seats**       | **Seats (%)**   | **Seats**       | **Seats (%)**   |
| Democratic Party (DP)       | 35.32           | 10              | 35.71           | 34.33           | 21              | 47.73           | 31              | 43.06           |
| Mongolian People’s Party (MPP) | 31.31           | 9               | 32.14           | 33.46           | 16              | 36.36           | 25              | 34.72           |
| Justice Coalition (MPP-MNDP) | 22.31           | 7               | 25.00           | 17.88           | 4               | 9.09            | 11              | 15.28           |
| Civil Will – Green Party (CWGP) | 5.51            | 2               | 7.14            | 4.75            | 0               | 0.00            | 2               | 2.78            |
| Independents                | 5.54            | 0               | 0.00            | 4.85            | 0               | 0.00            | 0               | 0.00            |
| Others                      | 100.00          | 28              | 100.00          | 100.00          | 44              | 100.00          | 72              | 100.00          |

Note: The results (number of seats in the nominal tier and overall) exclude the following four seats: two winning candidates of the MPP who were not approved as the GEC ruled that they had breached the electoral law, and the winning candidates in two other constituencies who did not receive the required 28% of the vote.


distributed there. In contrast, in the context of an institutionalized party system, these factors should have, with regard to the theory of strategic voting, a rather positive effect, that is, there should be more incentives to strategic voting in SMDs, or smaller districts, respectively than in multi-member districts.

12 There were two three-member districts (both in the capital city), 18 two-member districts and 6 single-member districts—all outside the capital. In total, there were 6 districts in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, with an average of 2.3 members per district, and a total of 20 districts in the rest of the country, with an average size of 1.7 members per district.
captured seats, the Justice Coalition and the Civil Will — Green Party (CWGP), surpassed that of the district tier, especially in the case of the Justice Coalition.

Mongolia’s emerging multi-party politics under the new MMM can be well demonstrated just at the district level. As shown in Table 2 (See Table 2), except of independent candidates, the Justice Coalition was the only party, or coalition of parties, which was able, at least partially, to compete with the candidates of the DP and the MPP. The Justice Coalition’s candidates won two out of 26 electorates (7.69%) and placed second or third to the DP and/or the MPP in two (7.69%) or seven (25.00%) electorates, respectively. Furthermore, the nominal tier also again demonstrated the importance of the urban-rural cleavage in Mongolia.

More specifically, the DP won four out of six electorates in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar and placed second in all six districts. In contrast, the MPP won 11 electorates (55.00%) in the countryside and placed second in 10 (50.00%), compared to seven districts (35.00%) won by DP candidates and seven where the DP finished second. The persistence of the urban-rural cleavage was confirmed by the results of the Justice Coalition, too. As the breakaway faction of the MPP, the Justice Coalition (or the MPRP as the main part of the coalition, more specifically) succeeded mainly in the countryside, although it also kept two out of its four district seats in Ulaanbaatar.

Moving on to strategic ticket splitting analysis, the initial hypothesis of our analysis is that parties that depend on party vote (typically smaller or medium-sized parties) would get more PR votes than district votes, whereas the proportions of district and PR votes in the case of larger parties would be more balanced.

This initial expectation has been met, as we can see in Table 3 (See Table 3) which shows the balance of district and PR votes by parties with representation.

Table 2
Position of parties with representation in the electorate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1st position</th>
<th>2nd position</th>
<th>3rd position</th>
<th>4th position</th>
<th>5th position and beyond</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provinces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPP</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWGP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>229</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPP</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>125</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPP</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice Coalition</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>CWGP</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>354</td>
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</table>


Table 3
Balance of district and PR votes by parties with representation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DP</th>
<th>MPP</th>
<th>Justice Coalition</th>
<th>CWGP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provinces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average district to PR vote difference (percentage points)</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>−3.21</td>
<td>−7.28</td>
<td>−0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of candidates with district vote &gt; PR vote</td>
<td>24.41% (34)</td>
<td>55.88% (34)</td>
<td>9.09% (33)</td>
<td>28.57% (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulaanbaatar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average district to PR vote difference (percentage points)</td>
<td>−0.08</td>
<td>−2.59</td>
<td>−4.71</td>
<td>−2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of candidates with district vote &gt; PR vote</td>
<td>28.57% (14)</td>
<td>35.71% (14)</td>
<td>21.23% (14)</td>
<td>14.29% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entire country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average district to PR vote difference (percentage points)</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>−3.03</td>
<td>−6.51</td>
<td>−1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of candidates with district vote &gt; PR vote</td>
<td>29.17% (48)</td>
<td>50.00% (48)</td>
<td>21.28% (47)</td>
<td>14.29% (42)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in parentheses are the numbers of officially nominated candidates by a given party.

electoral support translates into much lower gaps found between the nominal and the list tiers. More interesting findings arise from the comparison of the electoral gains of candidates and their mother parties for the DP and the MPP as the two strongest parties. Two distinct patterns can be found here: on one hand, the candidates of the winning DP received, on average, 0.97% of district votes more than their party did PR votes nationwide—the proportions of district and PR votes were balanced even in the provinces and especially in capital city districts. On the other hand, only between one-quarter and one-third of the candidates were more successful in the district than their party in the PR tier, suggesting that the overall positive result of their party (as the mean value of all districts) is primarily determined by the winning candidates in the districts, while the second- or worse-ranking candidates did worse than their party in the list tier.

In contrast, MPP candidates did, on average, worse in both provincial and capital city districts (on average, by 3.03% of the vote nationwide). However, half of MPP candidates were able to add many district votes to their party votes, especially in the provinces. Even those MPP candidates who ranked second or worse exhibited a similar trend as similarly ranking DP candidates, that is, fell considerably behind the winning candidates and obtained fewer votes than their party did in the PR tier nationwide. However, half of MPP candidates were able to add many district votes to their party votes, especially in the provinces. Even those MPP candidates who ranked second or worse exhibited a similar trend as similarly ranking DP candidates, that is, fell considerably behind the winning candidates and obtained fewer votes than their party did in the PR tier nationwide.

Table 4 (See Table 4) then presents summary statistics of candidate vote gap for political parties which gained representation in the Mongolian parliament. Here again, the data show that the mean values may hide important differences between districts, as indicated by minimum and maximum values of candidate vote gap. Especially the maximum values confirm the above-mentioned finding that there can be important differences between candidates of the same party, even within the same district. The fact that especially the maximum vote gap values for the two largest parties ranged approximately ±1.5% (and the values for two minor parliamentary parties were not much different) warrants the following hypothesis in accordance with both Duverger’s expectations and the findings of scholars who analysed the patterns of ticket splitting: most voters who support small parties in the list tier tend to give their other vote (or votes) in the nominal tier to one of the largest parties. This hypothesis is supported by the extremely low number of small party candidates with positive vote gaps.

At the same time, the considerable variation of the values of maximum vote gap suggests that a considerable segment of voters of large parties did not concentrate all their votes at district level to a single party but gave some to other parties’ candidates. This phenomenon can especially be expected among MPP voters, given the high popularity of MPRP leader, former Mongolian President and former MPP chairman Nambaryn Enkhbayar. Alternatively, these voters did not use all their votes, as suggested by the election results in the different districts.13

As we found some evidence of ticket splitting, another important question is related to possible determinants influencing the level of this phenomenon. The results of a linear regression model are presented in Table 5 (See Table 5). Contrary to existing evidence, our results are not entirely in conformity with the rational voting hypothesis, as only some relationships run in the expected direction, and at the same time, the results strongly suggest the presence of a great amount of personal vote. First, the impact of incumbency did not only prove statistically significant, but the size of the coefficient also suggests that incumbency had the strongest influence on ticket splitting. We thus found strong evidence of association between personal vote and incumbency, as incumbents’ vote gap was 2.3 percentage points larger than that of non-incumbents. Similarly, the effect of the rank variable was positive and statistically significant. Thus, we cannot confirm, as the theory of strategic voting assumes, that major-party candidates receive more district votes than candidates of small parties, as we expected a negative effect of this variable.

Furthermore, a positive, although insignificant, effect of the margin (1st to 2nd) variable, that is, the difference between the vote shares of the two strongest candidates in the district, suggests the presence of personal vote for the strongest candidate from the given district, although the effect is very weak. Our findings thus confirm Moser and Scheiner’s evidence (2005) of personal vote in other MMM systems, that is, strong personal voting in systems which creates a bias to more personalised politics, due to the absence of linking between the nominal and the list tiers of the electoral systems used. Thus we found also in Mongolia the increasing vote gap accompanied by the increasing district margin, that is, the fact that high-ranking candidates are less likely to receive strategic votes when in a close race.

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13 As Mongolian voters in a district have between one and three votes (according to district size), they cast only 92.57% of their votes (nationwide). Hence, almost 8% of the votes remained unused; voters cast 94.53% of their votes in the provinces, compared to 90.61% in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar.

---

**Table 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate vote gap by parties with representation.</th>
<th>Average vote gap</th>
<th>Maximum vote gap</th>
<th>Minimum vote gap</th>
<th>Candidates with positive vote gaps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>negative</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>12.37</td>
<td>−17.28</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPP</td>
<td>−3.03</td>
<td>14.57</td>
<td>−14.81</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice Coalition</td>
<td>−6.51</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>−17.45</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWGP</td>
<td>−1.47</td>
<td>10.41</td>
<td>−11.63</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in parentheses are share of candidates with positive vote gaps to all given party candidates.

In addition, we used two other measures of margin to account for the fact that differently ranked candidates in a given district could be affected by strategic voting in different ways. We used a measure of margin based on the gap between any candidate, no matter what place, and the front-runner and one based on the gap between the front-runner and the worst candidate. Here, in contrast to the margin (1st to 2nd) variable, both variables proved statistically significant, but on the other hand, their effect was inconsistent with only strategic voting or personal vote. While the margin (1st to 2nd) variable had a negative effect on candidate vote gap, thus also indicating the presence of personal vote in Mongolian districts, the opposite was true for the margin (1st to bottom) variable. Here, in contrast, the result (a positive effect of the variable) is highly consistent with strategic voting, indicating that strategic voting in Mongolia affects mainly candidates at the end of the race, while it is generally rather personal vote that influences the electoral behaviour of Mongolian voters at the district level.

Furthermore, our results serve to support evidence from previous studies (Bawn, 1999; Moser and Scheiner, 2005) of negative effects on vote gap of the proportion of the district vote won by independent candidates. Also in Mongolia, where independents traditionally received representation, although limited, the results suggest that increasing support for independent candidates reduced the vote gap, as successful independents logically reduced the pool of votes available to other candidates.

Finally, we included two control variables to evaluate specific institutional or contextual factors in Mongolia: district size and urban-rural. However, it should be noted that none of them proved statistically significant. At the same time, the effects of both the district size and the urban-rural variables are in compliance with theoretical expectations regarding strategic voting: the vote gap tends to be much higher in SMDs than in two-member or three-member districts.

Similarly, a positive, although insignificant effect of the urban-rural variable, that is, contrary our expectation, suggests that not even the post-communist split could disrupt incentives for much stronger strategic behaviour among voters in the provinces than in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. As in the case of the district size variable, a positive association between vote gap and district location leads us to hypothesize that institutional provisions, the electoral system, should be one of the linkage mechanisms, due to both the generally smaller district size in the provinces—all SMDs are located there—and the fact that the mean number of candidates per district reached 11.45 in the provinces compared to 20.83 in Ulaanbaatar. Especially the almost twice as many candidates per district in the capital city may represent another obstacle to strategic voting because voters find it much more difficult to determine which ones of so many candidates have good chances of getting elected and which ones do not.

### 6. Summary and conclusions

We have used some alternative methods to study the assumptions related to the presence of strategic voting or personal vote with regard to ticket splitting under the new Mongolian mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) system in 2012 and have come to three main conclusions. First, descriptive analysis confirmed that strategic ticket splitting is dependent on party size, as especially candidates of larger parties received, on average, more district votes than PR votes, while the opposite was true for candidates of smaller or medium-sized parties.

Second, there is a very interesting finding in this context that relates to candidates of the two strongest parties, the DP and the MPP. On one hand, only DP candidates received, on average, more district votes than PR votes nationwide, while the gains of MPP candidates in the districts lagged behind those of their party in the PR tier. But on the other hand, when we focus on...
individual districts, we see that DP’s positive results are primarily driven by district front-runners, while second- or worse-ranking candidates obtained fewer votes in the nominal tier than the party did in the PR tier in the same district. The same can be stated for MPP candidates as well. At the same time, the considerable variation of the values of maximum (both positive and negative) vote gap suggests that a considerable segment of voters of large parties did not concentrate all their votes at district level to a single party but gave some to other parties’ candidates or even did not cast all their ballots.

In this context, previous elections provided an interesting finding. While the MPP (former MPRP) availed itself of a traditionally strong and stable core of voters, especially in rural areas, the DP, like its predecessors, had to rely on support from a part of fluctuating voters and before every election, it was faced with the threat that those voters would cast a portion of their votes for other parties’ candidates (Tamir, 2004; Frohli and Sumati, 2008: 386–403). Overall, we can hypothesize that the split in the post-communist electorate somewhat decreased the stability in this part of the party spectrum as well, as some voters fled from the MPP to the MPRP.

Third, regression analysis confirmed a strong impact of personal vote on the electoral behaviour of Mongolian voters. Contrary to Reed (1999) and in conformity with Moser and Scheiner (2005), we demonstrated that in many cases of Mongolian candidates, personal characteristics could be a stronger explanatory factor than strategic voting as such. Here, positive effects on vote gap were proved especially for incumbency (a very strong indicator), as well as for ranking of candidates; both variables thus indicated the presence of genuinely personal vote. Similarly, two out of three indicators of margin (defined as difference between the vote shares of the two strongest candidates in the district, or difference between the front-runner and any other candidate) suggest the presence of considerable personal vote (although the latter with very low effect, nearing zero), while only the effects of the margin on the last-ranking candidates confirmed the presence of strategic voting.

Therefore, we have shown that strategic voting is not a universal phenomenon under the Mongolian MMM, as in the Mongolian elections of 2012 strategic voting affected mainly the candidates at the end of the race. Thus, it is generally rather personal vote that influences the electoral behaviour of Mongolian voters at the district level, which leads us to hypothesize that institutional factors alone are not sufficient to explain ticket splitting and strategic voting. This was further supported by the fact that neither institutional nor contextual variables proved as statistically significant, although their effects suggested some levels of strategic behaviour of Mongolian voters with district size as one of the linkage mechanisms.

However, as we found that the personal vote could be, in many cases when voters decide to do ticket splitting, more important than strategic voting, there are several aspects that merit further research. Previous analysis showed that strategic voting is possible in Mongolia, yet only when certain crucial conditions are met – most notably party system’s institutionalization, as Mongolia lacks several social cleavages that would generate pressure for additional parties (Maskarinec, 2017: 157–158). Similarly, as in a number of previous Mongolian elections, the election of 2012 was also held in the context of partial fragmentation of the party system caused by the 2010 split within the ’post-communist camp’.

Thus, we can mention several reasons behind some differences between expectations concerning the ticket splitting and strategic voting under the MMM in post-communist Mongolia and results found in established democracies. First, we can hypothesize that current transformation in the party system (split in the historically strongest Mongolian party) could limit voters’ rationality, create problems with strategic decisions and ultimately make it very difficult for, especially post-communist, voters to abandon hopeless, first loser, candidates. This was confirmed by the election results, especially from provincial districts (long-term post-communist strongholds), where Justice Coalition candidates were able, to some extent, compete with both MPP and DP candidates.

Other related problems include the fact that rational decisions of Mongolian voters are limited, as party preferences are typically known at the national, rather than district level (the problem of insufficient information) and at the same time also the fact that, especially in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar (but also in the countryside, although to a much lesser extent), many hopeless candidates ran in the districts, whose primary goal was to draw attention to the party list in the list tier, rather than win a seat in the nominal tier.

Finally, we must point to an institutional factor as well. In most countries using the MMM, there are only SMDs in the nominal tier, whether the candidate must obtain the plurality or the majority of votes at district level. However, in Mongolia, there were districts ranging between one, two and three seats in the nominal tier, together with partially different systems (FPTP in the former and unlimited vote in the two remaining types of districts). The institutional factor should be another reason behind voters’ limited willingness and limited ability to vote strategically by abandoning hopeless candidates in favour of those with a chance to succeed.

Here again, we find evidence of how party system deinstitutionalization can explain the above-mentioned fact that a part of MPP and DP voters gave their votes at the district level to candidates of other parties, thus significantly reducing the gains of the two main parties and moving district-level electoral competition far away from Duvergerian expectations. This finding may also be relevant for the study of other post-communist countries of Asia or Central and Eastern Europe as well as of established democracies of Western Europe. The increasing instability of party systems and the rise of populism in the West, which considerably transformed some long-term “consolidated” party systems, suggest that Western systems may be becoming more similar to those of consolidating post-communist countries, with former strategic voting behaviour left behind by their much more volatile electorates.

In this context, survey data (which, however, are not available yet) will help us reveal more complex patterns in analysing strategic voting and ticket splitting. For instance, we will be able not only to test or differentiate ticket splitting between districts and PR but also to analyse ticket splitting within multi-member districts in the nominal tier to identify factors which may have encouraged outcomes contrary to what would be expected in traditional MMM systems comprised solely of SMDs.
Another question for future research is associated with looking for additional factors explaining ticket splitting, as existing regression models explained relatively smaller percentages of total variance. In this context, the above-mentioned individual-level survey data may better capture the interactions between electoral system’s institutional attributes and the pattern of voters’ strategic behaviour. Just individual data can expand our analysis to include any specific contextual conditions, not only for a specific country but especially at the district level, which may moderate the effect of electoral institutions precisely at the district level. An important fact in this context is that even Duverger (1954: 228) did not consider his proposition as absolutely valid, but rather as a possible tendency which may be influenced by other factors. According to the way Duverger conceived of his law, the electoral system as an institution plays an important role, but only in modifying the effect of social forces on the creation of political parties.\(^\text{15}\)

References


\(^{15}\) Duverger describes the effect of electoral systems metaphorically as that of ‘a brake or an accelerator’ which hinders or facilitates growth in the number of political parties, but considers social-economic factors as the decisive ‘driving power’ of a country’s party system (Duverger, 1954: 235).