Loser’s Disconsent in Korean Presidential Primary: 
Separation of Powers, Electoral Cycles, and Party Organization\(^{(1)}\)

Yuki ASABA, Yutaka ONISHI, and Masahiko TATEBAYASHI\(^{(2)}\)

abstract: Both Hilary Rodham Clinton and Park Geun-hye conceded defeat in presidential party primaries and showed their willingness to cooperate with their respective competitors; Clinton is a good loser for President Obama while Park remains defiant by opposing President Lee. Why are there such significant differences between Clinton and Park in terms of the degree to which a loser in a presidential primary helps a winner in the campaign and, once elected, in the government? This study argues that loser’s (dis-)consent is a reflection of party organization, and that it is dependent on the separation of powers and electoral cycles in a presidential regime. By examining Korean cases in detail, this study highlights the significance of timing in a loser’s strategic consideration of actions for their next challenge as both presidential and legislative elections are non-concurrent and the interval between the two changes regularly in different presidencies.

1. Introduction

As she assumes her duties as the Secretary of State, Hilary Rodham Clinton has been helping President Barak Obama address diplomatic challenges ranging from the two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to nuclear nonproliferation towards Iran and North Korea, and from economic recovery to climate change. During the Democrats’ primaries, Clinton harshly and consistently criticized Obama for his lack of experiences and strategies, especially in the realms of security and diplomacy. Once she conceded defeat in the primary, however, she threw her full support behind Obama’s campaign against Republican candidate John McCain in the U.S. presidential election, and later decided to accept President Obama’s offer of working in his team of rivals. Although her bid for the first female president failed in the 2008 primary, Clinton is, without doubt, a good loser, proving with actions her repeatedly stated philosophy, “Bloom where you are planted.” She clearly wanted to see her seeds bloom in what became Obama’s setting, but once they bloomed differently she started behaving accordingly.

In stark contrast with Clinton’s example, Park Geun-hye has been continuously defiant ever since she was defeated by Lee Myung-bak in the Grand National Party’s primary for the 2007 presidential election in Korea. Although her pledges to support the archrival in her concession speech were appreciated as “graceful,” she was mostly uncooperative afterwards and sometimes rather disruptive not only in campaign for but also in government of President Lee Myung-bak, who won the voter’s election by a landslide without Park’s cooperation. For more than 2 years, Park Geun-hye has been the most powerful veto player for President Lee Myung-bak by declining his offer of the second highest post, the Prime Minister, in his government and opposing his major policy initiatives of constructing the Grand...
Gateway on the Korean Peninsula and building a new city with science and business complexes. It seems Park Geun-hye continues to resist blooming where she is planted, if it is not where she planned.

Both Clinton and Park conceded defeat and showed their willingness to cooperate with their respective competitors, but Clinton is a good loser for President Obama while Park remains disobedient by opposing President Lee. Why are there such significant differences between Clinton and Park in terms of the degree to which a loser in a presidential primary helps a winner in the campaign and, once elected, in the government? This study argues that loser’s (dis-)consent is a reflection of party organization, and that it is dependent on the separation of powers and electoral cycles in a presidential regime. By examining Korean cases in detail, this study highlights the significance of timing in a loser’s strategic consideration of actions for their next challenge.

2. Loser’s Dis-consent

Political competition inevitably entails both winning and losing, whether it is war, revolution, or election. Among others, election is characteristically a peaceful, democratic, and decisive mechanism in making a clear difference between a winner and a loser. The loser is expected to concede defeat, accept the winner’s rule for a few years, and join in the next election if he/she still wants to compete again. If electoral results are consistently challenged and the election itself rather constitutes a focus for political controversies and adversaries, no democracy remains robust and stable. Loser’s consent is, therefore, crucially important in keeping an election “the only game in town,” and in maintaining the legitimacy and stability of a democratic regime.

This holds true not only for the election of legislators and the chief executive but also for a party’s selection of candidates for such elected offices in general, and especially for that of a presidential candidate in a primary. First, with a very few exceptions of independents, candidates running for the legislature or the chief executive come from parties, irrespective of the differences in the way they are selected. Some of them are appointed by a closed body or even a single boss while others are chosen by wider constituencies. In most cases, regardless of whether they are a winner or a loser in the final result, the competitors in the race of elected office are party candidates. As they are screened twice, serious consideration of the first stage is as important.

Second, a loser is a loser. There is basically no difference between different stages of the whole screening process in terms of a loser’s tendency to deny that he/she is as such, and not to recognize the validity of the screening itself resulting in his/her defeat. Unlike the second stage in which voters clearly have a final say in electing public officers, defeat in the first stage of selecting party candidates is much more difficult to concede because a loser is tempted to claim that the results are not final and not necessarily binding. Rather than conceding defeat and helping a winner campaign in the second stage, he/she may quit the party, create a new one of his/her own under whose banner he/she declares to run, or just run as an independent to compete with the winner in the first stage as well as other parties’ candidates. As it has serious implications for the second stage, loser’s consent in the first stage should be examined as well.

Third, as the stakes in a presidential election are generally higher than in a legislative one, a loser in a presidential primary has much more difficulty in conceding defeat than MP hopefuls, and
conceivably the most difficulty among all losers in any form of an election. Despite this fact, little attention has been made on the selection of presidential candidates in a party primary in the eyes of a loser. What is lacking more in existing studies is an examination of the aftermath, not the preprimary situation, even though the game is to be continued(4). After a primary ends, competitors whether they are a winner or loser face completely different strategic environments in which they have to make a choice regarding their next action. While the winner in a presidential primary, the one and the only candidate of the party, tries to win over concession and cooperation from the loser(s) before proceeding to the next stage, there is no guarantee that a loser will consent to the winner’s wishes.


As it is one of the most important roles and functions of a party, selection of candidates for elected office indicates how a party is organized. Fielding a candidate for the chief executive through primaries is indicative of one form of party organization while loser’s (dis-)consent shows the degree of party discipline. Loser’s (dis-)consent in a presidential primary is a typical example of party organization and discipline, and it is dependent on the separation of powers and electoral cycles in a presidential regime.

Recent studies have shown that different constitutional systems have different effects on party organization. Samuels and Shugart in particular argue that the separation of powers makes a party presidentialized while the fusion of powers parliamentarized(5). In a presidential regime, both the legislature and the president are directly and separately elected by voters and they survive independently of each other. This separate origin and survival of the legislative and executive branches of government makes a party prioritize winning the presidential election over others. Keeping policy coherence and even winning a legislative election are, for example, condemned to be secondary in terms of a party’s priority. As running for the chief executive is exclusively available only to one person for each party, incongruence is inevitable within the same party between a presidential candidate and all others. Not only MP hopefuls but also a loser(s) in a presidential primary have different preferences than the winner. “The separation of powers does not merely split one branch from the other, but it splits parties internally, posing particular dilemmas for members of the same party who occupy and seek to occupy different branches of government(6)” and for ones who seek to occupy the same branch of government with different results of parties’ primaries.

In a parliamentary regime, on the contrary, an incongruence of this kind cannot exist. As the legislature alone is directly chosen by voters and the prime minister and its cabinet are responsible for the legislature, winning a parliamentary election is a shared goal among members of any single party. In order to get elected and stay in the post, the prime minister needs to care not so much about the majority in the legislature as about members of his own party. Incongruence may arise between governing and opposing parties, but does not, in principle, exist within the same party.

In a separation of powers system, both the legislature and the president are directly and separately elected by voters, but the elections are not necessarily held on the same day. It has been well known that casual relations exist between electoral cycle and party system(7). On the one hand, concurrent elections have a reducing effect on
the number of parties in the legislature and is, *ce-teris pairibus*, more likely to result in a unified government in which the presidential party enjoys the majority in the legislature. On the other hand, non-concurrent elections often function as a retrospective evaluation on the performance of the incumbent president, often leading to the presidential party’s loss with the result of a divided government in which the president is faced with an opposition-controlled legislature. Not only the manner in which parties interact with each other but the president’s relations with the legislature as well are strongly influenced by whether an electoral cycle is concurrent or non-concurrent.

Quite surprisingly, however, no attention has been paid to the different effects on party organization which different electoral cycles have. It can hardly be assumed that an electoral cycle has limited effects on parties’ interactions alone, not on how an individual party is organized internally. Nevertheless, unlike party system, party organization has for long constituted a void in the studies on constitutional system as well as on electoral cycle. This study is hopefully to the studies on the relationship between electoral cycle and party organization what Samuels and Shugart’s contribution is to the studies on the relationship between constitutional system and party organization.

4. Choice among Loyalty, Voice, or Exit and Backward/Forward Constrains

Once he/she is as ambitious and determined as to join in a presidential primary, a loser is assumed to have preferences for staging a comeback some time in the future. The problem lies in exactly when and why. Loser’s (dis-)consent is a result of strategic considerations of possible actions for the next challenge. A loser is basically left with two completely different options. One is to gain back the loss immediately while the other is to wait and try again later. The first option is equal to what Hirschman calls “exit(8).” Not conceding defeat, a loser quits the party, and makes a new one of his/her own and declares to run, runs as an independent, or supports another party’s candidate. The second option is divided into two more subcategories. One is “loyalty” in Hirschman’s term, or conceding defeat and helping a winner make a campaign for the final contest. The other is “voice,” or remaining defiant against a winner, if not questioning defeat itself. The more discontented a loser is, the more likely he/she is to take the “voice” option over “loyalty,” or take the “exit” one rather than “voice.” Electoral cycle matters in making a difference among those three different types of loser’s action. While Hilary Rodham Clinton’s working in President Obama’s team of rivals is a good example of “loyalty,” Park Geun-hye’s opposing President Lee Myung-bak is “voice.”

When a loser makes a choice among “exit,” “voice,” and “loyalty,” he/she takes into consideration the significance of different electoral cycles on chances of his/her making a comeback. In order to try again next time, a loser needs to be convinced that waiting this time is not only possible but also meaningful and rather advantageous in the prospects of the future whose value is discounted in the present by time distance. Different electoral cycles mean different time intervals between the date of presidential election and that of legislative election.

In a separation of powers system, a presidential election is held at regular intervals, for example, once every 4 years in the United States or 5 years in Korea. Once he/she is defeated in a presidential primary, a loser needs to wait for one fixed term of the final winner in the election. On
this point, there is no difference between Clinton and Park. The differences lie in whether a presidential term limit exists and whether both presidential and legislative elections are concurrent. In the United States, on the one hand, the incumbent president can run for as long as two consecutive terms and both presidential and congressional elections are concurrent. In Korea, on the other hand, a one-term limit is provided by the Constitution and both presidential and legislative elections are always non-concurrent. Those differences provided Clinton and Park with different strategic environments in which they made a choice among “exit,” “voice” and “loyalty” on the “disconsent” continuum respectively. Putting aside the difference in electoral cycles, Clinton is more inclined to the “loyalty” end of the continuum than Park is because she may be faced with the same Obama again as the incumbent president in the next primary while Park is not fearful of such incumbency effects.

Among non-concurrent elections, the Korean case is quite unique and illustrative. As both the chief executive and the legislature serve fixed terms, 5 and 4 years respectively, and both presidential and legislative elections are held in December and April respectively, the interval between the two elections is not fixed and changes regularly. While we call the time interval between the date of a presidential election and that of the next legislative election “forward constrain,” we call the one between the date of the next legislative election and that of the next presidential election “backward constrain.” The shorter the interval is, the stronger we count the constrain while the longer the interval is, the weaker. Over elections, the former “forward constrain” gets stronger with the interval shorter by 1 year for each election while the latter “backward constrain” gets weaker with the interval longer by 1 year. The combination of the two different constrains, forward and backward, or what we call “the combined constrain,” is fixed each time and there exist four different combinations for each 20 years as 20 is the least common multiple of 5 and 4, the numbers of years in office for the president and the legislature (Figure 1).

In the case of the 17th presidential election in which Park Geun-hye sought to win the Grand National Party’s ticket to no avail, for example, forward constrain was, on the one hand, the strongest with just a 4-month interval as the 18th legislative election was held in April 2008 immediately after her rival, Lee Myung-bak, was finally elected as the president in December 2007. On the other hand, backward constrain was the weakest with the 4-year-and-8-month interval as long as both the 18th legislative election and the next 18th presidential election in December 2012 are concerned. However, one out of four presidents, Lee Myung-bak faces two legislative elections during his 5-year term, with the second one scheduled for April 2012. As long as the 19th legislative election and the 18th presidential election are concerned, backward constrain is the strongest with an 8-month interval. Constrains, both forward and backward, and combined, are all the strongest in the 17th presidential election. The electoral cycle in Korea is characterized not only by its non-concurrent nature but also by different, but regularly changing intervals between the two different types of elections over time. Such characteristics are the most decisive in a loser’s choice of actions their for next challenge after a party primary ends (Table 1, 2).

As legislative election is one of the best stepping stones for a loser to make a comeback by organizing his/her own political group in one way or another, it matters the most when the next legislative election is held and how many years and
months remain before the next presidential election. Our hypothesis is that the stronger the combined constrain is, the more likely a loser is to take either a “loyalty” or “voice” strategy than an “exit” one, and vice versa. When the combined constrain is the strongest, there remains almost no time for a loser to organize his/her own group outside the party in anticipation of next legislative election to be held immediately after presidential election. For their parts, those who seek to occupy the legislature are eager to support the presidential candidate, expecting a coattail effect on their chance for (re-)election. At the same time, there exists a sufficient amount of time for a loser to make good preparations for one after the next legislative election to be held just months before the next presidential election. As the incumbent president is not allowed to run for reelection, would-be candidates in the legislative

Table 1  Time Intervals between Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presidential Election (Year)</th>
<th>From Presidential Election to Legislative Election</th>
<th>From Legislative Election to Presidential Election</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14th Election (1992)</td>
<td>3 years and 4 months</td>
<td>1 year and 8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th Election (1997)</td>
<td>2 years and 4 months</td>
<td>2 years and 8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th Election (2002)</td>
<td>1 year and 4 months</td>
<td>3 years and 8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th Election (2007)</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>4 years and 8 months /8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th Election (2012)</td>
<td>3 years and 4 months</td>
<td>1 year and 8 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2  Constrains, forward or backward, and combined

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presidential Election (Year)</th>
<th>Forward Constrain</th>
<th>Backward Constrain</th>
<th>Combined Constrain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15th Election (1997)</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th Election (2007)</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>(Weak)/Strong</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
election tend to side with emerging presidential candidates, not with the lame duck executive. It is, therefore, rational for a loser to wait and see while staying in the party at least for the time being, and to keep some distance from the incumbent president.

When the combined constrain is weaker, on the contrary, there exists plenty of time both before and after the next legislative election, which increases uncertainties in political competition in the years ahead and lessens considerably the value of political competitors’ keeping the same party label intact between elections. Accordingly, it leaves much more room for a loser in a primary to woo the sitting legislators into his/her own camp because party switching is not so costly and demanding and sometimes more beneficial to them as the next election is not so immediate. Taking such prospects of relative easiness in co-optation into consideration in advance, a loser is more impatient with his/her recent defeat and more inclined to abandon the party in order to regain their loss right as quickly as possible.

Of course, there are some other competing hypotheses. First, and the most powerful rival, changes of electoral rules are more important. In 2005, a revision was made in the electoral law to the effect that a loser in a party primary is banned from running for president in the popular vote in whatever way. This means that in the 17th presidential election in 2007 when the revised law took effect, Park Guen-hae could not, in the first place, run as an independent or under any other party’s banner. She is, however, still left with the “exit” option of quitting the party although she, in fact, remains in it. Second, path dependency of different parties matters more. If some party was first made of more than two different parties which continue to exist as different factions within the party after the merger, a party primary is a contest among different factions. In such an environment, a loser in some faction tends to break away with the party when a candidate in another faction wins. Such a possibility cannot be denied, but more important is the relationship between party organization/discipline and electoral cycles than party organization/discipline itself. Third, some differences in the terms of a competition or the winning prospects are significant. Depending on whether he/she is in the presidential party or in the opposition in the present or in the future, or on whether the party is leading by a comfortable margin over the others in popularity, a loser may take different actions.

5. Case Studies

We will examine the four different cases of the Korean presidential primaries since Korea experienced regime changes and democratic consolidation in the late 1980’s: the 14th in 1992, the 15th in 1997, the 16th in 2002, and the 17th in 2007. We exclude the 13th presidential election in 1987 which was held in the wake of the democratization and institutional changes. At the time of the presidential election, it was unclear how and when the legislative election was made. In our examination, not only the presidential party but also the most powerful opposition party with a viable candidate deserves attention.

Table 3 shows the names of the winner and the loser in the primaries for each party as well as the final winner elected as the president in the popular vote. Except for the National Congress for New Politics in the 15th presidential election which handpicked Kim Dae-jung by himself, all the parties selected their candidates through some form of primaries. In the seven primaries in focus, there are, accordingly, seven losers as well as seven winners. Out of those seven losers, we
exclude Democratic Party’s Lee Ki-taek in the 1992 election and Choe Byung-yul of the Grand National Party in the 2002 election. Although they were the top losing candidates respectively, both Lee Ki-taek and Choe Byung-yul were defeated by a large margin, which means that they were marginal in the first place and not worthy of serious examination. We will examine the remaining five losers: the Democratic Liberal Party’s Lee Jong-chan in 1992, Lee In-jae (twice) of the New Korea Party in 1997 and of the Millenium Democratic Party in 2002, Son Hak-gyu of the United New Democratic Party and Park Geun-hye of the Grand National Party both in 2007.

Table 4 shows the losers’ names and their chosen actions respectively. While Lee Jong-chan and Lee In-jae (twice) took “exit” strategies, Son Hak-gyu and Park Geun-hye chose either “loyalty” or “voice” options. While the former three cases were the occurrences when the combined constrain was weaker, the latter two cases happened when it was the strongest. In the following analysis, we examine their different actions in turn, especially Park Geun-hye’s case in detail.

In 1992, Lee Jong-chan was defeated with 33.2 percent of the votes to 66.3 by Kim Young-sam in the Democratic Liberal Party’s primary. At first, he did not concede defeat by pointing out the irregularities in and the unfairness of the primary and demanding for the nullification of the results. As victorious Kim Young-sam was consolidating his grip on the party, then, disappointed and angry Lee quit it to create a new party of his own with some fellow legislators impatient with Kim’s power consolidation, under whose banner he declared to run for the president. As his popularity was declining with the advent of the election, he finally dropped his presidential bid and expressed his support for the Hyundai conglomerate founder Chung Ju-yung of the Unification National Party.

Some attribute his disconsent to the intraparty factionalism stemming from the origin of the Democratic Liberal Party. The party was created just two years before in 1990 as a result of the merger of three different parties which until then continued to exist as three different factions. While Kim Young-sam was the boss of one faction, Lee Jong-chan was a representative for another. The remaining one faction did not field a candidate, but publicly supported Kim Young-sam. As the primary was virtually a contest among two different camps, the loser broke away from the party by citing unbridgeable differ-

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### Table 3 Results of the Party Primaries and the Presidential Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presidential Election (Year)</th>
<th>Presidential Party</th>
<th>Opposing Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14th Election (1992)</td>
<td>Kim Young-sam/Lee Jong-chan (Democratic Liberal Party, DLP)</td>
<td>Kim Dae-jung/Lee Ki-taek (Democratic Party, DP)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In each cell, the names of the winner/the loser in the primary (the party name, its abbreviation) are shown. By the loser, we mean the runner-up. Also, the final winner in the popular vote is shaded.

### Table 4 Loser’s Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presidential Election (Year)</th>
<th>Presidential Party</th>
<th>Opposing Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14th Election (1992)</td>
<td>Lee Jong-chan (DLP)</td>
<td>Exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th Election (1997)</td>
<td>Lee In-jae (NKP)</td>
<td>Exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th Election (2002)</td>
<td>Lee In-jae (MDP)</td>
<td>Exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Park Geun-hye (GNP)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In each cell, the loser’s name (the party name) and his/her chosen action are shown.
ences with the winner inherent in the party’s trajectories.

This explanation may be convincing, but it remains unexplained why some legislators followed Lee Jong-chan’s quitting the party when they were enjoying the presidential party’s premium. Without the prospect of their follow-ups, Lee Jong-chan himself must have hesitated in quitting the party in the first place. This is mainly because party switching was not so costly and demanding to the sitting legislators in addition to those with presidential ambitions as the next legislative election was scheduled more than three years later. Both increased uncertainties in political competition and decreased values in party labels encouraged the loser as a whole in reorganizing itself from one faction in a party to a different party.

Lee In-jae is a trickster in the political landscape of Korea. He lost the party primaries twice and exited twice in two concessive presidential elections in 1997 and 2002. He was catalysis in the 2005 revision of electoral law which prohibits a loser in a party primary from running for elected office, dubbed as the “Law of Preventing another Lee In-jae.” In 2007, both Son Hak-gyu and Park Guen-hae could not run by law as an independent or under any other party’s banner. We, therefore, have to admit that as the cases in focus are not independent from each other, the problem of endogeneity is implicated in our case studies.

In 1997, after he lost the New Korea Party’s ticket to Lee Hoi-chang, Lee In-jae did not concede defeat and quit the party. He then created his own party, the New Party for the People, stood for the president, and finally placed in the 3rd after Kim Dae-jung and Lee Hoi-chang. As the vote margin between the top two candidates was quite small, another Lee, not Kim, would certainly have won the election if he had conceded defeat before. Later, he joined President Kim’s party after disbanding his own. In 2002, however, President Kim’s Millenium Democratic Party beat Lee’s persistent ambitions again. Immediately after Roh Moo-hyun was selected instead, he abandoned the party again to join a minor one.

Putting aside voters’ political and moral judgments on Lee In-jae’s twice repeated disconsent, it remains to be seen why such an action was taken each time in the first place. In both cases, his “exit” actions are to be considered rational respectively. Because there was plenty of time left before and after the next legislative election, he bet on political gambling with less reservation for himself and others as well. His assumption was that some legislators would follow him with whom he could rebuild his power base outside the party and on whom he could count to help him campaign. He must have taken into consideration such a prospect of cooptation of and cooperation from legislators when he decided to quit the party.

Last, but not the least, both Son Hak-gyu and Park Guen-hye in 2007 are examined. What is interesting is that they are the same in not choosing “exit,” but different in their choices between “loyalty” and “voice.” While the former chose “loyalty,” the latter chose “voice.” It is, therefore, important to explain consistently both their same-ness and difference.

After he was defeated in the United New Democratic Party’s primary, on the one hand, Son Hak-gyu conceded defeat and demonstrated his full support for Chung Dong-young by concrete actions. He assumed his new duties and roles of working for Chung as the committee head of his campaign for the popular vote. His rationale for this “loyalty” was that there was no room left for his maneuvering legislators who cared more about their own election than someone else’s
presidential election in some way or others as the 18th legislative election was just 4 months later after the 17th presidential election. It was also because Son and others were certain with the knowledge of opinion poll results that Chung would lose the election and face calls for the leader’s change from within the party. A good and rational loser bet that showing constrains for a while would get paid more than impatience certain to fail. In fact, soon after the presidential election which Chung lost by double scores, Son was selected as the party’s new leader tasked with catering to the legislator’s bid for reelection. He succeeded in making a quick comeback to the center stage of the political scene. For Son, “loyalty” was not meant to be altruism in the first place, and soon turned out to be rewarding although he himself failed in the legislative election and stepped down to take responsibility later.

Park Guen-hye, on the other hand, has been consistently defiant since she lost the Grand National Party’s primary to Lee Myung-bak by a slight margin of less than 2 points. She nearly won it as she outnumbered Lee in the vote share among the ranks and files of the party. However, her initial lead was offset by the introduction of opinion poll results into the selection of a party candidate, an innovation in the history of party politics all over the world. She was lagging behind Lee by about 9 points among the general public, which overturned the result. Nevertheless, she at first declared to concede defeat and to do her best in helping Lee, which was highly appraised. However, she did not literally stand by Lee in his campaign for the whole population even once. She was, at best, uncooperative with, and rather hostile to Lee even before he finally got elected as the president.

Park Guen-hye’s disconsent became stronger and more open after Lee’s inauguration. She flatly declined his offer of the second highest post, the Prime Minister, in his government. She also made it public that she was completely of different opinion from President Lee in his major policy initiatives. While Park was against constructing the Grand Gateway on the Korean Peninsula, Lee was eager to realize one of his manifestos during the campaign. When Lee proposed to revise his predecessor’s project of building a new city originally planned to host several administrative ministries and agencies into science and business complexes at the end of 2009, Park was against the revision. The controversies over the fate of the new city dragged on well into next year, turning into a naked power struggle between the two. Although President Lee is a unified government after the Grand National Party won the majority in the 18th legislative election, he is facing much more difficulties in keeping control over the party than in negotiating with the opposition-sidelined legislature. By blocking his major policy initiatives, Park Geun-hye is virtually the most powerful and vocal opposition within the presidential party for President Lee Myung-bak. The question is why and how she remains such a powerful “voice.”

Park Geun-hye’s goal is simply to become a president at the earliest possible opportunity. By the law of preventing another Lee In-jae, she was prohibited from running as an independent or under any other party’s name although she could still quit the party. She had no other choice but to wait for at least 5 years. All three options of “loyalty,” “voice” and “exit” are equally available to her, though. In choosing which option, she seriously considered when the time would be ripe for trying to stage a comeback given the political events calendar. Among others, legislative election, another national event after the presidential election, without doubt, matters the most in her
considerations of timing. In the next 5 years, Park will be confronted with such occasions twice. While the first legislative election was to be held just 4 months after the presidential election, the second one was scheduled 8 months before the next presidential election. As it is too close to the present and too far away from the future, on the one hand, the former was considered to be an improper time for taking any action. The latter was, on the other hand, the best possible timing because there was a sufficient period of time for Park to make good preparations for consolidating her power base while staying in the party. As President Lee is not allowed to run for reelection and is accordingly condemned to suffer more from the lame-duck phenomena in the latter years of his presidency, Park is faced with almost no incentive for supporting President Lee in his policy initiatives. Rather, it would be quite rational for would-be candidates in the next presidential election, especially already viable ones, to keep some distance from the incumbent president during his/her term. No doubt, Park Geun-hye is the front runner in the next presidential race at this moment.

Our examination of the five losers’ different actions in the past four presidential primaries in Korea has proved that the stronger the combined constrain is, the more likely a loser is to take either a “loyalty” or “voice” option than an “exit” one, and vice versa. Both Lee Jong-chan and Lee In-jae (twice) took “exit” strategies as the combined constrain was weaker, while Son Hak-gyu and Park Geun-hye chose either “loyalty” or “voice” options because it was the strongest. In short, Table 5 shows the fitness of our model with the empirical cases. The model fits quite well in all the cases. Our model is, it is suffice to say, superior to others as long as parsimoniousness and consistency are concerned. It is, however, not exclusive and exhaustive at all in its explanatory power. Supplemented by other factors such as changes of electoral rules, path dependency of different parties, and some differences in the terms of a competition or the winning prospects, as is the case above, it is more powerful.

6. Conclusion

Once it is put in comparative perspective, an analysis of loser’s disconsent in Korean presidential primary makes the following contributions in both theoretical and empirical senses. First, loser’s (dis-)consent is important not only in the election of the legislature and the chief executive but also in a party’s selection of candidates for such elected office. Together with winner’s restrain, loser’s consent is crucial in distinguishing (s)election from any other forms of political competition in terms of the decisiveness and conclusiveness of the results, and, furthermore, in having a democratic regime endure over elections. Democracy is only possible to conceive and sustain when both a winner and a loser behave accordingly. What is more important than deciding who wins/loses and repeating one election after another is a loser’s conceding defeat each time.

Second, as a manifestation of party organization and discipline, loser’s (dis-)consent is de-
ependent on the separation of powers and electoral cycles in a presidential regime. Although studies on party system have long been made systematically, those on party organization are lacking quite considerably. Inspired by Samuels and Shugart’s recent study on the effects of different constitutional systems on party organization, this study sheds light on another aspect of a presidential regime, or different electoral cycles, on it. Timing matters all the more for a loser preoccupied with making a comeback some time in the future and left with different actions to choose.

Third, Korea is one of the best possible cases in which one can examine the significance of timing in a loser’s choice of actions for their next challenge as both presidential and legislative elections are non-concurrent and the interval between the two changes regularly. Differences between concurrent and non-concurrent elections and among non-concurrent ones are important in explaining not only different party systems and the inter-branch relationship between the legislature and the chief executive, but party organization as well.

Given that the number of the cases is limited, our examination is preliminary and explorative at best. Moreover, as it takes 20 years for the electoral cycle in Korea to take a turn, the last four presidential elections in the past 20 years are no more than a series of one-time-only-events. Our model will be tested further against more empirical cases with the coming 18th presidential election scheduled in 2012. As the combined constrain is as weak as in it was 1992, our model predicts, a loser is more likely to take an “exit” option than “voice” or “loyalty.” We will see how robust and limited our model is and what is needed to modify it. Our hope is that this study will stir debates on the significance of time factor in political analysis and that electoral cycle will be examined from a new perspective.

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