

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, INTERNET POLITICS, AND CITIZENS' ORGANIZATIONS IN SOUTH KOREA*

EUI HANG SHIN

University of South Carolina Columbia

South Korea has undergone a rapid process of democratization over the past decade. Two factors stand out as forces that have significantly influenced the democratic transition: the growth of citizens' organizations and the Internet news services that have provided the forum for citizens' participation in formulating public opinion. The primary purpose of this study is to analyze the effects of Internet politics and citizens' organizations on the nomination and campaign processes of the 2002 presidential election in South Korea. The two major presidential candidates, Roh Moo Hyun of the Millennium Democratic Party (MDP) and Lee Hoi Chang of the Grand National Party (GNP), had diametrically opposing characteristics, not only in ideological and political stances, but also in personal and family backgrounds. An important aspect of the 2002 South Korean presidential election was that major parties selected their nominees through presidential primaries, the first time ever in the history of South Korean presidential elections. A citizens' political fan club (Nosamo) played a critical role in the MDP primaries as well as in Roh Moo Hyun's winning campaign in the presidential election, by mobilizing young voters as a formidable voting bloc. In addition, the Oh my News, an on-line news service organization, empowered voters to effectively respond to changing conditions in the presidential race and organized a series of anti-American candlelight demonstrations that helped to solidify the progressive segment of voters in supporting Roh Moo Hyun. Citizens' organizations and Internet politics would continue to make significant contributions to the consolidation of democracy in South Korea.

Key Words: *South Korea, presidential election, citizens' organizations, Internet politics, consolidation of democracy*

INTRODUCTION

South Korean society has undergone democratization processes in economic, political, and social structures over the past ten years under two civilian presidents. The economic and political reforms that the Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung administrations have instituted are remarkable. In the past decade, civil society has been transformed into an effective political

*The research for this paper was conducted during the 2003-2004 academic year when the author was a special exchange professor in the Department of Sociology, College of Social Sciences, Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Ho Young Yoon with the research project.

force that impacts the political system through various channels of participation (Choi, 2002; Cho and Park, 2002; Kim, 2000; Shin, 2003a; Steinberg, 2000; Wein, 2000). The rapid multiplication of citizens' organizations addressing such diverse and important issues as civil rights, gender, the economy, the environment, education, and public health in the 1990s, has complemented the economic and political reforms initiated by Korean political society, including the executive, legislative and judicial organizations (Cho and Park, 2002; Kim, 2000; Shin, 2003b; Wein, 2000).

The *Directory of Korean NGOs*, published in 1999 by the Citizens' Movement Communication Center, listed 7,600 organizations. A factor that has contributed to the proliferation of civic organizations has been the increase in government financial assistance to civic organizations under the Kim Dae Jung administration (Kim, 2001; Wein, 2000). The administration hoped that non-governmental organizations would initiate a citizen's movement to overcome the financial crisis of 1997.

The growing interest of citizens in political and economic reforms and other societal issues has coincided with the Kim Dae Jung administration's drive to mobilize popular support for its political and public policy agendas. Many of the leaders of civic organizations participated in the democratization movement of the 1980s. Thus, they were previously committed to the reform movement and had substantial experience in running non-governmental organizations. Civic organizations such as the Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ), People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD), Green Korea United (GKU), and the Korean Foundation for Environmental Movement (KFEM) had established national networks, well-organized administrative structures, and solid reputations in terms of their programs and records of accomplishment.

A second factor that has provided a favorable environment for the development of citizens' organizations has been a growing distrust of politicians, political parties, and political systems in general. Former presidents and their family members have been at the center of a series of major scandals involving corruption, bribery and other abuses of political power and positions. Furthermore, the 1997 financial crisis revealed the incompetence and inefficiency of the government bureaucracy, as well as the lack of transparency of the political system (Lee, 2000; Kim, 2000). On the whole, the increased distrust of the political system, the favorable environment for activities of non-governmental organizations and the availability of experienced civic organizational leadership have provided ideal conditions for the participation of civic organizations in the political process (Kim, 2000).

On January 12, 2000, the Citizens' Alliance for the 2000 General Elections

(CAGE) was formally organized, with more than 450 civic organizations as participating members. Its immediate plans included organizing a campaign against Article 87 of the Election Law that prohibited civic organizations from engaging in election-related campaign activities. Other major plans were to develop a set of guidelines for the nomination of candidates for the National Assembly, and to publish a list of politicians whom they deemed unfit to be candidates for the 16th National Assembly election on April 13, 2000.

The CAGE blacklisting and defeat campaigns had significant effects on both the nomination processes of candidates by major parties, as well as on the final outcomes of the National Assembly election on April 13, 2000. However, the significance of CAGE activities goes far beyond their effects on the election results. In the context of Korean political history, the CAGE campaign signified citizens reclaiming the long-lost right for self-determination, and securing basic rights guaranteed in a participatory democracy. Furthermore, the anti-nomination and defeat campaigns by CAGE against blacklisted politicians can be viewed as a people's resistance movement, or as a civil disobedience movement against the political party-centered election systems and undemocratic political practices that essentially limited the participation of civil society in the election process (Cho, 2002; Moon, 2000; Shin, 2003a; Steinberg, 2000; Wein, 2000).

The presidential election that was held on December 19, 2002 had several important dimensions in the evolution of South Korean politics. To become their party's nominees, both Lee Hoi Chang (GNP) and Roh Moo Hyun (MDP) went through their respective party's presidential primaries, the first time ever in the history of South Korean presidential elections. In the past, each party's presidential nominee was selected at the party's national convention, where the party's delegates from election districts would participate in the selection process. Under this system, the party boss would have enormous influence over the entire nomination process, from the selection of convention delegates at local district levels, to the handpicking of the nominee. Factions within a party also played important roles in that they would form coalitions on the basis of their political interests. Thus, deal making, vote buying, and factional fighting had frequently been observed in the nomination conventions of major parties. In view of the long history of the candidate nomination procedure, the introduction of presidential primaries by major parties in itself was a truly significant watershed in party and election politics in South Korea.

The two major presidential candidates, Roh Moo Hyun and Lee Hoi Chang, had diametrically opposing characteristics, not only in ideological

and political stances, but also in personal and family backgrounds. Roh Moo Hyun was born to a poor farming family, finished a commercial high school, and taught himself to pass the bar examination. He defended young college students who were arrested and tried for their participation in the street demonstrations and underground activities against the authoritarian military regimes in the 1970s and 1980s. Roh Moo Hyun served two terms in the National Assembly and also served as Minister of the Maritime and Fishery Ministry in the Kim Dae Jung administration. He showed progressive ideological and political orientations in that he supported Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy" toward North Korea. He also supported re-establishing Korean-U.S. relations as equals; he asserted the need for further reform of the chaebol groups and has advocated for the rights of labor unions. Lee, on the other hand, was born and raised in an upper class family; his father was a public prosecutor. Lee graduated from an elite high school and university, had a very successful legal career as a judge in the court system, and became a Supreme Court justice before his appointment as Prime Minister by President Kim Young Sam in 1993. He also ran unsuccessfully against Kim Dae Jung in the 1997 presidential race and remained as head of the opposition party, GNP. His position on inter-Korean and Korea-U.S. relations, chaebol groups, and labor union issues was opposite of Roh's position.

In the entire process of the MDP primaries, the role of one group truly stood out: "Nosamo," which literally means "People Who Love Roh Moo Hyun." It was a political "fan club" that supported Roh Moo Hyun as a politician and as a candidate in the MDP primaries. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that the Nosamo played a critical role in Roh Moo Hyun's success in the MDP primaries, as well as in his winning campaign in the presidential election.

Role of Media in Politics

In South Korea, the media has been a key player in the unrelenting struggle for democratization throughout the successive authoritarian military regimes. The media stood up against the regimes by questioning their legitimacy, and by criticizing oppressive policies and undemocratic practices. The media, especially the printed media, have earned the respect and trust of voters. Thus, editorials and news reports have had profound effects on the formation of public opinion on various issues, including voters' attitudes toward political parties, political candidates, and campaign issues. Media organizations have traditionally attracted many college educated and

politically ambitious young individuals for their initial and preparatory careers as reporters before they embark on political careers. A substantial number of both past and present National Assembly members, cabinet members, and high-ranking government officials have backgrounds as reporters of media organizations. Furthermore, many of the “386 generation” (those who are in their 30s, entered college in 1980s, and were born in 1960s), with progressive ideological and political orientations, are currently dominating the rank and file of the staff of major media organizations in South Korea. The net effect of the composition of the personnel in the media organizations has been to make the media’s orientations progressive on inter-Korean affairs, anti-American, and critical of the chaebol groups and of the established economic and political elite.

However, many of the major newspapers are family owned and have become fairly large, highly profitable business organizations. They own and operate various subsidiaries, including weekly, monthly, sports, women’s, and children’ journals and magazines. In addition, they have organized and sponsored profitable cultural, entertainment, and sports events. Until the time when Kim Dae Jung won the presidential election in 1997, the major newspapers had enjoyed a special status as exceptions to possible scrutiny by the government, and especially by the tax agency, due to the traditional practice of protecting the freedom of press. However, the size and scope of business activities of these newspapers, as well as those of their owners, reached the point where government agencies began to review the financial reports of the newspapers and their parent companies.

More importantly, the editorial orientations of the major newspapers tended to be conservative in terms of ideological issues, especially inter-Korean relations. Thus, these newspapers were at odds with President Kim Dae Jung, who advocated the “sunshine policy,” a liberal engagement policy toward North Korea. In fact, Kim Dae Jung and his party leadership believed that the newspapers unfairly treated them during the 1997 presidential campaign, as well as his administration after he was elected president. Major newspapers maintained these critical attitudes towards Kim Dae Jung and his administration, especially regarding regional favoritism in key appointments, corruption, and political influence peddling scandals involving his sons and close confidants.

From the beginning of the Kim Dae Jung administration, a primary economic, financial and political reform agenda was the reform of media organizations. The National Tax Agency (NTA) conducted a series of tax auditing of several major newspapers in 1999. NTA reported that it had discovered that several newspapers had evaded paying a large amount of taxes.

As a result of the tax investigation, several newspapers were fined and ordered to pay the back taxes they owed. In addition, several owners of major newspapers were arrested on tax evasion charges, and subsequently, were found guilty and sentenced to jail terms. This seriously tainted the public image of the major newspapers. In particular, college students and young intellectuals criticized Chosun Ilbo, the largest and most influential daily in Korea, for its critical attitude toward Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy," and its ideologically conservative stance. In addition, Roh Moo Hyun, then a presidential candidate who was very popular among college students and young voters, had a continuing feud with Chosun Ilbo because of incidents that involved the newspaper's reports about Roh's personal life and family background. The conflict led to a boycott movement of Chosun Ilbo by some college students and young progressive groups. Although the impact of the movement on the newspaper did not seem to be serious, the newspaper suffered a setback in terms of its image and prestige.

Internet News Media

Another important development in the South Korean mass media industry over the past five years has been the emergence of the Internet news service. The Kim Dae Jung administration has spearheaded the development of the information technology sector by providing a substantial amount of public funds. An outcome of the government policy was the spread of broadband Internet access. South Korea ranks 6th in the world in the number of Internet users, behind only the United States, Japan, China, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Nearly 67 percent of South Korean households have broadband, and "this high-speed service means that people use the Internet more, spending an average of 1,340 minutes on line per month" (Watts, 2003). With the rapid growth of Internet use, Internet news service organizations have grown exponentially in recent years.

The leading on-line newspaper is *Oh my News*. Ohmynews.com was founded in December 2000. It had a full-time staff and 700 "guerrilla reporters," using the approach that it would provide 24 hours a day news services as well as the forum for dialogue among citizens on various current issues (Joongang Ilbo, February 24, 2003; Monthly Joongang, March 2003). As of February 2003, *Oh my News* has 45 full-time staff and more than 23,000 "citizen reporters" who contribute nearly 80 percent of stories reported by the Internet newspaper (BusinessWeek, February, 24, 2003). With more than 3 million readers, *Oh my News* has become an influential news service in South Korea. In addition, with its young, idealistic, and progressive staff

reporters, led by its 38 year-old founder who was a former student activist, *Oh my News* has played an important role in generating young voters' interest in current political issues, as well as candidates and campaign issues in the elections. In particular, by providing a forum for on-line debate between those who post news and reports and readers with conflicting viewpoints, the Internet news service transformed the nature of forming public opinions. In other words, an average citizen who tended to be a passive recipient of news reports by traditional newspapers, television and radio stations, has become an active participant in the debates on the various current issues. Moreover, the transactions are nearly instantaneous in that a reader can comment on a report and the comment will appear almost immediately on the on-line commentary/message board with points and counter points made by others. Participation in the on-line debate forum has raised the political sensitivity of not only those who actually post their viewpoints, but also of the readers in general. On the whole, as *BusinessWeek* noted with a headline of "The Web Site That Elected a President (*BusinessWeek*, February 14, 2003)," *Oh my News* has had a significant effect on the MDP's presidential primaries, campaign process, and the election outcomes of the 2002 presidential election.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effects of Internet politics and citizens' organizations on the nomination and campaign processes of the 2002 presidential election in South Korea. In the first section of this paper, I will review the candidate nomination processes of each major party through primaries. In the second section, I will document the history of "Nosamo," a political fan club of a presidential candidate, and the role that organization played in the primaries and the election. I will focus on how the Internet has been used to empower young voters in mobilizing themselves as a formidable voting bloc, as well as in effectively responding to changing conditions of the presidential race. In addition, I will discuss the abuses and problems of Internet politics as they were manifested in the 2002 presidential election in South Korea. It should be noted that Korean election law prohibits any campaign activities in support of a specific candidate by any organizations other than the registered and recognized political parties. In fact, during the official campaign period, which is only about four weeks long, even clan, alumni, and home town association meetings are not allowed, in order to prevent any possible use of such gatherings for election campaign purposes. Nosamo's activities had to end with Roh Moo Hyun's win of the MDP pres-

idential primaries in order to comply with the election law. Thus, in this paper, I will focus on the role of Nosamo in the MDP primaries.

ANALYSIS

Data and Methods

The National Election Commission (NEC) provides historical information on the results of local, parliamentary, and presidential elections at its website (www.nec.go.kr). The data used in this study are drawn from the website. In addition, I use data compiled by four major daily newspapers and an on-line news service: Chosun (www.chosun.com), Joongang (www.joins.com), Donga (www.donga.com), and Hankyoreh (www.hani.co.kr) and *Oh my News* (www.ohmynews.com). I especially focus on the data on each political party's presidential primaries from the newspapers. For the results of tracking polls on candidates, I use the website of the Gallup Korea (www.gallup.co.kr), along with websites of the four major newspapers.

Presidential Primaries

Although both GNP and MDP had presidential primaries, MDP adopted the primary system before GNP. To a certain extent, the adoption of the primary system by MDP forced GNP to follow. In this context, it may be reasonable to suggest that MDP gave the voters a positive impression by demonstrating its willingness to reform the party's political system, more so than GNP did (Joongang Ilbo, February 19, 2002; March 11, 2002). It should be noted that MDP was seriously concerned with a sharp decline in its popularity among voters, due to revelations of corruption and scandals involving President Kim Dae Jung's sons and his inner circle confidants. MDP desperately needed to transform their public image and attract voter's interest and support, and its leadership believed that the presidential primary was their ticket (Joongang Ilbo, January 14, 2002).

MDP's presidential primaries began on March 9, 2002 in Cheju and ended on April 27, 2002 in Seoul. In all, the MDP primaries were held at 16 different cities/provinces. MDP primaries were a hybrid of closed and open systems in that the eligible participants in the primaries consisted of the party's precinct level delegates (20%), randomly selected party members from the local district party members pool (30%), and randomly selected voters from the pool of general voters of respective areas who submitted their applications to participate in the primary to MDP (50%). MDP argued that its sys-

tem would accommodate not only the preferences of party members, but also the opinions of the general public regarding the candidates.

MDP primaries attracted much interest from the public; in many areas the number of general voter applicants was nearly a hundred times greater than the available slots.

Seven candidates entered MDP's primary in Cheju, and no clear front-runner emerged after the first two primaries in Cheju and Ulsan. Two candidates dropped out of the race after the second primary. The third primary was held in Kwangju/Chonnam on March 16, 2002, and it was very important in the sense that Kwangju has historically been a center of the Kim Dae Jung's and MDP's stronghold. Voters in the area would support the candidate who was favored by Kim Dae Jung, although he had declared that he would be impartial and endorse whoever won the primaries. The third primary in Kwangju turned out to be critical in that Roh Moo Hyun (37.9%) edged his top rivals (31.3 % for Lee In Jeh and 17.9% for Han Hwa Gap) in that primary. The expectation was that Han Hwa Gap, whose regional origin is Honam, and who was believed to be a favorite son of Kwangju/Chonnam, would win the primary. In addition, it was expected that Lee In Jeh, who ran as a third party candidate in the 1997 presidential race, would do well, considering his name recognition within the party as well as among voters in general. The Lee In Jeh camp accused Kim Dae Jung of a conspiracy and behind the scene influence, following the Kwangju/Chonnam primary, but Kim Dae Jung's aides denied the charges.

Although Lee In Jeh won the next two primaries in Taejun and Chungnam (his home region and political support base), by wide margins over Roh Moo Hyun (67.5% vs. 16.5 % in Taejun, 73.7% vs. 14.2% in Chungnam), critics projected that Roh Moo Hyun would win MDP's nomination. By the time the 7th primary was held in Kyongnam, Roh's home province, two more candidates had exited the race. After losing the primaries in Taejun and Chungnam, Roh Moo Hyun won the next six primaries. Lee In Jeh decided to drop out of the race after the April 14 primary in Chonbuk, leaving only two candidates, Roh and Chung Dong Young, in the primaries. This all but assured Roh's nomination as MDP's presidential candidate although the two primaries at Incheon and Seoul were yet to be completed. Roh Moo Hyun won 11 out of the total 16 primaries and received 72.2% of the total votes cast in the primaries (Korea Now, May 4, 2002).

Several important developments were connected with the MDP primaries. First, as indicated earlier, the primary system generated great interest even among voters who were not affiliated with MDP. This interest was

clearly reflected in the number of nonparty member voters who applied for participation in the primaries, although many of the voters were recruited by the camps of different candidates in the race. Second, the primaries provided candidates with opportunities to be exposed to eligible voters in the primaries, as well as to the general public through media coverage. Third, the differences among the candidates in terms of policy proposals, campaign promises, and personalities became increasingly apparent through repeated joint appearances in organized political forums. Fourth, MDP introduced an electronic voting system for all the primaries, and the results were tabulated and announced immediately following the completion of balloting. The use of high technology gave a very positive impression about the accuracy and cleanness of the entire nomination process. Fifth, the actual events of the primaries were organized in a festive atmosphere that involved staged hoopla in indoor stadiums, unlike traditional party conventions that tended to be boring and somber. This style of primaries especially catered to the taste of relatively young voters.

The Role of Citizens' Organizations in the Presidential Election: The Case of "Nosamo."

The idea about forming a citizen's support group for Roh Moo Hyun started immediately following his loss in the National Assembly election of April 13, 2000. Although he would have easily won a seat in the National Assembly had he run in one of the election districts in Seoul, he purposely decided to run as an MDP nominee in one of the districts in Pusan— a GNP stronghold. He wanted to challenge the Pusan voters to put aside regional animosity and long-standing negative sentiments toward Kim Dae Jung's MDP. Roh Moo Hyun asserted that true democratization of the Korean political system would not be realized without expelling regionalism in elections.

Immediately after Roh's defeat in the National Assembly election of April 13, 2000, his website's bulletin board was bombarded by citizens' sympathetic and encouraging messages. Individuals who visited Roh's home page posted messages that suggested forming an organization of supporters of Roh Moo Hyun. On May 7, 2000, approximately forty people from all over the country attended a preliminary organizational meeting in Taejun. They were quite diverse in terms of age and occupational backgrounds, ranging from high school students to professionals in their forties. The initial project of the organizing committee was to construct an official home page of the organization on the Internet. The official home page was open on May 17,

2000 with the website address of www.nomuhyun.org. The home page address was changed subsequently to www.nosamo.org.

Soon after the opening of the official home page, the date of the inaugural meeting and the constitution were voted on electronically by members using member's identification numbers and passwords to cast their ballots at the website (www.nosamo.org/home/etc/nosamo-intro4.asp). The members voted to adopt the constitution that was labeled as "the promise of Nosamo," which contained only three sentences: "1) I will, together with Roh Moo Hyun, participate in overcoming the distorted regional sentiment in our country. 2) For the development of true democracy, I will participate voluntarily in the activity programs that would be adopted by the Nosamo members. 3) The promise of Nosamo and the recorded precedents of Nosamo activities will substitute the constitution, and the promise and precedents can be modified only through an electronic voting by the entire Nosamo membership (Shin 2002)." The person who initially proposed the "Promise of Nosamo" asserted that Nosamo is striving to become a model Internet activity group that would provide an alternative direction to old-fashioned politics, and that Nosamo would conduct its activities on the basis of operation procedures that best fit its purposes.

The inaugural meeting was held on June 6, 2000 at a "PC Room" in Taejun (Shin, 2002). Of the total 500 members at that time, 100 members attended the meeting. Roh Moo Hyun attended the meeting and the *Oh my News* had a live Internet broadcast of the proceedings of the inaugural meeting. Myung Keh Nam, a fairly well known movie actor, was elected as "a national representative worker" (president) via electronic voting during the two-day period of July 20-22, 2000. One hundred and eighty-six of the total 745 members participated in the voting. When the first anniversary conference was held on June 6, 2001 in Taejun, the membership had increased to about 4,000, and Myung Keh Nam was re-elected as president of Nosamo in July 2001 (Shin, 2002). Two noteworthy activities of the group were a group bicycle trip from Pusan to Kwangju, four days and 300 km long, which was led by Myung Keh Nam, and an eight-week long group-hiking trip. Nosamo claimed that the Pusan-Kwangju bicycle trip was for the promotion of regional unity between the Youngnam and Honam regions, while the hiking trip was for the unification of North and South Korea. Through these and other community service activities, Nosamo was solidifying the membership networks and preparing itself for subsequent activities in support of Roh Moo Hyun's run for president (www.nosamo.org/home/etc/nosamo-intro4.asp).

As mentioned earlier, the MDP leadership decided to introduce a presi-

dential primary system that is similar to that of the United States. Poll after poll showed that MDP's popularity was rapidly declining, largely due to the corruption scandals involving Kim Dae Jung's sons and his inner circle power brokers. Furthermore, MDP did very poorly in the October 25, 2001 special elections of the National Assembly. Thus, MDP had to come up with a drastic measure that would alter the public perception of the party and attract voters' interest. The presidential primary would signify a democratic procedure of selecting the party's nominee, and it would mean an end of the traditional, old fashioned national convention for nomination of the presidential candidate. The old system tended to provide advantages to those who have strong organizational "good old boy" networks within the party and could generate a large amount of campaign funds. Since Roh Moo Hyun lacked both the organizational support network within MDP, as well as the connection to raise the campaign funds, the primary system would have been the only avenue for Roh Moo Hyun to secure MDP's nomination.

It is important to review Nosamo's activities in the MDP primaries and to analyze the reasons why Nosamo was one of the most important factors for Roh Moo Hyun's win of the MDP nomination. Also, it is essential to investigate the significant differences between Nosamo and other citizens' organizations. First, with regard to Nosamo's activities in the primaries, the recruiting of voters to apply for a slot in the "people's electoral college" was quite effective. In all 1,600,000 voters applied to be on the people's electoral college, that had 33, 250 positions. Utilizing the communication networks on the Internet, Nosamo members aggressively promoted the participation of voters in the primaries. Furthermore, once the electoral college members were selected, Nosamo members conducted an organized campaign of writing letters to each of these members. Since telephone calls and mailing of printed materials to the electoral college members are prohibited by law, Nosamo members mailed them "hand-written" letters, which is allowed by the election law, advocating voting for Roh Moo Hyun in the primaries. In fact, Nosamo organized a campaign of "one member writing ten letters" during the primaries (Yoon, 2002).

Second, nearly three hundred members, who had paid their own expenses, would show up at each of the 16 sites of the primaries and would conduct the organized campaign activities at the convention halls. Many of them came with their spouses and children, thus giving positive impressions to the electoral college members of their commitment in supporting Roh Moo Hyun, and with the family atmosphere they created. This certainly changed the traditional election campaign scenes in that a great majority of campaign workers at any political party convention site used to be paid

campaign workers or hired hands by candidates. In fact, one of Nosamo's catch phrases was "Have Nots Can Do It!" (Roh, 2002). It implied that Roh Moo Hyun could win the election even though he did not have political organizational networks and money to finance his presidential campaign. The voluntarism displayed by Nosamo was a departure from the top to the bottom style of organized party politics, where the voice of an average participant is not heard and a participatory democracy is not practiced (Chung, 2002; Yoon, 2002; Sohn, 2002).

Third, from its inception, Nosamo has been a political fan club whose members communicate with each other almost exclusively via the Internet. It has attracted members in their 20s, 30s, and 40s who use the Internet regularly. It follows that information can be disseminated among the members quickly and economically, and that follow up actions can be organized timely and effectively. In a way, Nosamo was a joint product of the emerging political philosophy among younger generations and their digital electronic culture (Chung, 2002). The Internet user population has remarkably increased over the past several years in South Korea. The number of Internet users increased from 366,000 in 1995 to 9, 430,000 in 1999; 22,230,000 in 2001; and 26, 270,000 in December 2002 (Korea Times, November 27, 2002; Korea Insight, January 2003). In this context, Nosamo became a benchmark for a full scale "e-politics" of information society in South Korea ([www.sisapress.com/January 22, 2003/sisa-main-view](http://www.sisapress.com/January%2022,%202003/sisa-main-view)). As Chung (2002) noted, the "386 generation" was in search of a new political leader who would represent their political perspectives, while Roh Moo Hyun was in dire need of grass-roots voter organizations that would share and support his political agenda. Hence, Roh Moo Hyun and Nosamo represented an ideal match. It should be noted that other major candidates have had their own support groups, home pages, and the use of the Internet for their networking. These include Lee Hoi Chang's "Changsarang" and Lee In Jeh's "Insarang" (Chung, 2002; Yoon, 2002). Nevertheless, those political support groups were not as effective as Nosamo, largely because the political and personal images of both Lee Hoi Chang and Lee In Jeh as political leaders were not consistent with those that inspired the "386 generation" voters (Yoon, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, Nosamo was instrumental in Roh Moo Hyun's successful campaign in the MDP primaries. Afterwards, Nosamo was seemingly ineffective in the actual campaign of the presidential election, largely due to existing election laws that prohibited campaign activities by private organizations in support of a presidential candidate. Nevertheless, Nosamo still played a critical role in Roh Moo Hyun's election as president by generating

young voters' interest in the presidential race. More importantly, Nosamo was quite effective in informing the voters through the Internet about Roh Moo Hyun's positions on inter-Korean relations, on new approaches toward Korean-U.S. relations from an equal status perspective, and on policies regarding chaebols. Nosamo activities were believed to be effective in building an important voting bloc of young voters who overwhelmingly voted for Roh Moo Hyun in the presidential election of December 19, 2002.

Fourth, the organization of Nosamo as a grass roots/citizens' organization may have been influenced by the rapid growth of citizens' organizations in Korea in the 1990s under the Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung administrations (Cho and Park, 2002; Shin, 2003; Steinberg, 2000; Wein, 2000). In particular, the movement of the Citizens' Alliance for the 2000 General Election (CAGE), that blacklisted unacceptable candidates for their nominations bids and organized a defeat campaign if they ran in the parliamentary election of April 13, 2000, might have had some impact on the initial planning of Nosamo. Furthermore, both Nosamo and CAGE played similar roles in bridging the gap between political and civil society in the election process. However, Nosamo and CAGE are significantly different in many accounts. As Sohn (2002) indicated, representatives of nearly nine hundred civic organizations participated in CAGE; they were well known veteran civic organization leaders, professionals, and experts in different fields. In contrast, Nosamo membership included substantially more diverse groups in terms of educational and occupational characteristics. Nosamo was more truly a grass roots citizens' organization than CAGE, with regard to the composition of participants. CAGE attempted to influence the nomination of candidates by major political parties from outside of the political arena. On the other hand, Nosamo was more directly involved in the politics of a particular party, MDP, and their activities would be categorized as participatory politics or politics of engagement (Sohn, 2002).

Moreover, CAGE employed a strategy of negative campaigning by blacklisting candidates and by organizing a defeat movement of those blacklisted candidates on the basis of their unacceptable past ethical and political behaviors (Cho and Park, 2002; Shin, 2003; Steinberg, 2000; Wein, 2000). Nosamo, however, concentrated on a positive campaign in support of a specific candidate in the election process (Sohn, 2002). With regard to organizational structures, typical citizens' organizations, including CAGE, tended to have highly centralized power and decision making structures. The leaders at the central office would make important decisions, and local chapters would follow the directives from the central office. However, from its inception, Nosamo has given a lot of autonomy to local branches in organizing

relevant activities, and important decision making was done through electronic balloting that involved the participation of the entire membership without any exception (Sohn, 2002).

The membership of Nosamo increased from about 500 at the time of the inaugural meeting to about 4,000 one year later, about 40,000 two years later, and more than 70,000 at the time of the presidential election on December 19, 2002 (www.nosamo.org). In contrast, a great majority of citizens' organizations lack any sizable membership, and thus they are frequently dubbed "citizens' organizations without citizens" (Sohn, 2002). Another important difference is the financial structure of the organizations. Nosamo is strictly supported by contributions from its members. In most cases, each member is expected to pay the same amount, and all expenses in activities are out of the individual member's pocket. In contrast, many citizens' organizations rely heavily on external funding, including government funds and contributions from large corporations (Sohn, 2002). Furthermore, some citizens' organizations have a considerable number of paid permanent staff at their central offices. Nosamo had only two or three paid staff at their central office (Sohn, 2002). On the whole, these differences in the organizational dimensions between typical citizens' organizations and Nosamo seem to shed some light on the future directions of citizens' organizations in South Korea.

Reactions of "Netizens" to the Breakdown of the Alliance between Roh Moo Hyun and Jung Mong Joon

The popularity of Roh Moo Hyun had sharply increased in April 2002 when he virtually secured the MDP nomination by winning the primaries. In some polls he was leading Lee Hoi Chang of GNP by a substantial margin, 60.5 to 32.6 percent. Roh Moo Hyun's popularity, however, had drastically dropped since then, and he was trailing Lee Hoi Chang by June 2002: 48.9 to 36.3. The sharp decline in Roh Moo Hyun's popularity in polls was largely due to the scandals involving President Kim Dae Jung's sons and close associates. Thus, Roh Moo Hyun, as a presidential candidate of MDP, President Kim Dae Jung's party, was losing the support of voters mainly because of his association with Kim Dae Jung and MDP. Roh Moo Hyun's popularity had remained nearly 10 percentage points behind Lee Hoi Chang from June to November 2002. To worsen the situation for Roh Moo Hyun, Chung Mong Joon entered the presidential race as a third party candidate in September 2002. Chung Mong Joon, a son of Chung Ju Young — the late founder of the Hyundai Group, and a three-term, independent

National Assembly member and head of the Korean Soccer Association, was instrumental in the remarkable success of the Korean national team in the 2002 World Cup that was hosted jointly by Korea and Japan in May—June 2002.

Polls had indicated that Chung Mong Joon was a viable candidate in that a substantial proportion of voters were turned off by both Lee Hoi Chang being too conservative and by Roh Moo Hyun, on the other hand, being too progressive. Some polls conducted in September 2002, about the time of the declaration of his candidacy, revealed that Chung Mong Joon was ahead of Lee Hoi Chang by two to six percentage points and that Roh Moo Hyun was a distant third (Gallup Korea, December 19, 2002). However, Chung's popularity began to plummet amidst allegations against the Hyundai Group of its illicit stock transactions and its involvement in a secret payment of \$500 million to North Korea, in coordination with President Kim Dae Jung, shortly before his summit meeting with Kim Jong Il in Pyongyang on June 15, 2000.

Since both Roh Moo Hyun and Chung Mong Joon were trailing Lee Hoi Chang in the polls, they were motivated to form an alliance. The two camps made an official announcement that they had agreed to field a single candidate on November 15, 2002. Roh Moo Hyun became the candidate of the alliance on the basis of the results of special polls, and Chung Mong Joon endorsed Roh Moo Hyun. Chung Mong Joon appeared with Roh Moo Hyun at campaign rallies, and he gave speeches in support of Roh Moo Hyun. Some newspapers reported that when the two camps agreed to form an alliance and unify their candidacies, they also agreed that they would share power in the next government and would allocate cabinet positions to the coalition partner. It was also rumored that, although Roh Moo Hyun agreed to provide the Chung Mong Joon camp with cabinet positions, he refused to give a written promissory note on that agreement. In any case, on December 18, 2002, Chung Mong Joon and Roh Moo Hyun appeared together at a campaign rally in Seoul. At that rally there were people who carried cardboard signs that read "Chung Mong Joon in 2007!" They intended to elect Chung Mong Joon as president in 2007, when the next presidential election will be held. After seeing those signs, Roh Moo Hyun remarked, in the middle of his campaign speech and in the presence of Chung Mong Joon, that "I can tell that you are the members of NA21 (Chung Mong Joon's party). I must point out that, in our party, MDP, we have two such promising candidates as Chung Dong Young and Chu Mi Ae as well. Thus, we must wait and see!" Newspapers reported that Chung Mong Joon was insulted by Roh Moo Hyun's remarks and called an emergency meeting

with his key confidants after the rally.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Chung Mong Joon directed his spokesperson to announce that he was withdrawing from the alliance with Roh Moo Hyun, and that voters should make their own decisions on whom to vote for in the next day's presidential election. Around nine o'clock that evening, less than three hours before the day of the presidential election, the major television networks reported the story. The television networks also reported that Roh Moo Hyun attempted to visit Chung Mong Joon at his home, but that Chung Mong Joon's aides told Roh Moo Hyun that Chung Mong Joon was already in bed and he was not available to meet with Roh Moo Hyun at that time. Thus, the one month old, historic alliance between two presidential candidates had ended just a few hours prior to the day of election.

The news about the breakdown of the alliance had spread quickly among voters, especially among young voters through the Internet and cellular phones. Young voters in their 20s and 30s were reminding each other to actually vote the next day, as well as encouraging each other to contact their friends to vote. On the website of "Neighborhood News Corner," an all time record of 3,000,000 "hits" were registered between 12:00 p.m. on December 18th and 3:00 a.m. on December 19th, 2002. The number of hits on that site during the early morning hours was nearly six times as much as the daily averages. Regarding the role of *Oh my News* in this incident, *BusinessWeek* (February 24, 2003) made the following observation: "While television and the newspapers carried spotty coverage of the defection, *Oh my News* posted nonstop video and text reports, attracting a half-million visitors in less than 12 hours. The next day, *Oh my News*' loyal readers followed the unfolding events on-line and via Web-link mobile phones. When conservative candidate Lee Hoi Chang started edging ahead, many of those same readers sent out a blizzard of e-mails and cell-phone text messages encouraging friends to go to the polls, helping Roh to secure a victory."

In this sense, Chung Mong Joon's withdrawal of his endorsement could well have been a fatal blow to Roh Moo Hyun, but it also might have turned out to be a wake-up call for young Roh Moo Hyun supporters to mobilize their cohorts to participate in voting.

On December 19, 2002, the Munwha Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) conducted post-election polls to estimate the effects of Chung Mong Joon's last-minute withdrawal of his endorsement on the election results (<http://www.hani.co.kr/section-003300000/2002/12/0033000002002122055813.html>). The survey included 358 respondents who initially supported Jung Mong Joon in the presidential race but became Roh

Moo Hyun supporters after the Roh-Jung alliance. The results of the survey showed that about 65.9 percent of the respondents actually voted for Roh Moo Hyun while 24.9 percent abstained and 6.1 percent voted for Lee Hoi Chang (<http://www.hani.co.kr/section-003300000/2002/12/0033000002002122055813.html>).

In addition, the survey also revealed that 11.7 percent of those who were supporters of Kwon Young Gil, the DLP candidate, cast their votes for Roh Moo Hyun on the election day. Furthermore, Roh Moo Hyun's lead over Lee Hoi Chang in the polls that were conducted on December 18, 2002, before the breakdown of the alliance and the day before the election, turned out to be about the same as his winning margin in the election.

Thus, it may be reasonable to argue that the net effect of the breakdown of the alliance was not great in either direction, mainly because of the lateness of the incident. It is clear, though, that on-line message boards, Internet news services, e-mails, and cell-phones made it possible for supporters of Roh Moo Hyun to react to the crisis and to effectively manage the situation, thus controlling possibly fatal damage to Roh Moo Hyun's election. This quick and effective reaction at a large scale would not have been possible without the information networks of the Internet and the electronic culture and competence of the young age group.

Anti-Americanism and the Internet

Although anti-Americanism is not a new phenomenon in the formal 50-year history of Korean-U.S. relations, historically it was never a factor in South Korean elections. However, anti-American sentiment was an important factor that influenced the outcome of the 2002 South Korean presidential election. Interestingly, *Oh my News* was instrumental in publicizing a fatal traffic accident in which two middle school girls were killed by a U.S. tracked vehicle in June 2002, and the subsequent acquittal of the drivers by the U.S. military court in November 2002. *Oh my News* also organized a series of four-week long anti-American candlelight demonstrations, demanding a formal apology from President Bush about the incident and an immediate amendment of the Status of Forces Agreement between South Korea and the United States. It was revealed after the election that a staff reporter for *Oh my News* disguised himself as a reader and posted the first message to organize the anti-American demonstrations. In any case, the protestors held candlelight vigils near the U.S. Embassy in Seoul. Thousands of young people participated in the demonstration nightly, and it spread to other major cities during the critical period of the presidential

election campaign. The anti-American demonstrations essentially mobilized young voters to support a progressive and nationalistic cause. It also diverted possible attention from the problems caused by the revelation that North Korea had restarted its nuclear weapons development program. On the whole, *Oh my News* was largely responsible for encouraging the anti-American demonstrations. In turn, the demonstrations helped Roh Moo Hyun to get elected president by solidifying the young voters' support, and by minimizing the possible effects of the North Korea factor.

Political Defection and the Internet

Another incident was regarded as a crisis in terms of Roh Moo Hyun's status as a presidential candidate. After Roh Moo Hyun's popularity in the polls had started to drop in May 2002, more than a dozen National Assembly members of MDP left the party to pressure Roh Moo Hyun to yield to a more viable candidate, namely Chung Mong Joon. Some of them switched parties, and joined GNP. That was a serious blow to Roh Moo Hyun's candidacy. However, the defection of some prominent figures from MDP triggered a series of interesting reactions from young supporters of Roh Moo Hyun. Utilizing the Internet communication network, Roh Moo Hyun supporters, spearheaded by Nosamo members, posted numerous extremely negative criticisms about the politicians who switched their party affiliation, and dubbed them "political migratory birds." In addition, realizing the possible impact of the defections from MDP on Roh Moo Hyun's prospects of winning the election, the young Roh Moo Hyun supporters organized a campaign fund-raising drive among grass-roots voters by suggesting the use of a "piggy bank." As a result, 7 billion Won was collected for Roh Moo Hyun's campaign fund.

Retrospectively, from the standpoint of Roh Moo Hyun's camp, these defections might have been "a blessing in disguise." That is, by accepting these "migratory birds National Assembly members," GNP might have added to its dominance on the basis of the number of seats it held in the National Assembly. However, it might have seriously tainted the political image of the party, as well as the image of Hee Hoi Chang (Park 2002; Weekly Donga, January 17, 2003). The party switching essentially represented "the dirty, old politics as usual." Hence, it may be reasonable to speculate that the defections of MDP National Assembly members did not hurt Roh Moo Hyun's cause. Rather, it might have backfired on GNP and Lee Hoi Chang in the presidential race by providing supportive evidence for Roh Moo Hyun camp's claim that Lee Hoi Chang represented "old politics."

DISCUSSION

The 2002 South Korean presidential election involved a race between two candidates with diametrically opposite ideological, organizational, and personal characteristics. Both citizens' organizations and Internet newspapers have had significant effects on the presidential primaries and the main election campaign by balancing hitherto uneven playing fields in the political arena. Without the support of citizens' organizations and the on-line newspapers, a candidate such as Roh Moo Hyun, who has a progressive political orientation, does not have well established support networks within his party, and does not have political connections for campaign fund raising, would not have a fair chance of winning the presidential election.

In this sense, Roh Moo Hyun's election has important implications for future political dynamics in South Korea. First, through the 2002 presidential election, participatory democracy has increased in that grass roots organizations could play a powerful role in the political process and that the voters may be sensitized and mobilized through the electronic communication channels, including the Internet. Second, the power and prestige of the traditional media has substantially declined with the emergence of the Internet media. In the Roh Moo Hyun administration, it is expected that the Internet media would play an increasingly important role in South Korean politics. In fact, President Roh Moo Hyun gave *Oh my News* the first exclusive interview as president before any major newspapers, television, and radio networks. In addition, Roh Moo Hyun's transition team opened a Web site to solicit citizens' input on his cabinet and senior advisor appointments, and more than 5,000 recommendations were submitted on line.

Third, the division between the traditional media — major newspapers and television networks — and on-line news services would be intensified. In particular, the major newspapers may continue to maintain conservative orientations, while the on-line newspapers may manifest more liberal and progressive orientations, in view of the characteristics of the readers for each category of media. Fourth, the legislations of the legal guidelines on the Internet news and information service organizations did not keep up with the rapid growth of the Internet industry, and the lag has caused confusion and problems. In particular, *Oh my News*' broadcasting of a live interview with a political candidate in the campaign process was ruled illegal by the National Election Commission last year on the grounds that the Internet news service is not considered a regular news media. However, the Constitutional Court has subsequently ruled that *Oh my News* is recognized

as a media outlet. In view of the increasing influence of Internet news service organizations, it is expected that the National Assembly would take a close review of the on-line news services and would legislate regulations on the activities of the organizations.

Finally, depending on the development of on-line news services, there may be some backlash due to inherent problems of the Internet media. For instance, there is an increasing public concern with possible abuses of on-line message boards, commentaries, and debates on various cultural, economic, political, and social issues. Due to anonymity in the on-line exchange of viewpoints among the readers, it is possible to have inaccurate, sensational, and demagogic views posted on the Internet media. Furthermore, personal attacks and trials on the Internet of public figures including politicians, writers, artists, athletes, and performers in entertainment industries have increased in recent years. This development would be detrimental to the formation of public opinions and to the constructive exchange of views. It is hoped that Roh Moo Hyun's administration encourages the Internet media to develop in the direction that contributes to the consolidation of democracy in South Korea.

REFERENCES

- Beck, Peter. 2003. "Korea's Next President." *Korea Insight*, 5: 1-2.
- Choi, Jang Jip. 2002. *Minjuhwa ihu i minjuju (Democracy in the Post-Democratization Era.)* Seoul, Korea: Humanitas.
- Cho, Hee-Yeon and Won-Soon Park. 2002. "Democratic Reform and Civic Movements in South Korea." KEIA ed., *The Challenges of Reconciliation and Reform in Korea*, pp. 81-102. Washington, D.C.: KEIA.
- Chung, Sang Ho. 2002. "Nosamo e taehan chŏngch'i sahoehakchok punsok (A sociological analysis on Nosamo)." Heikyong Roh, ed., *Yuk'waehan chŏngch'i pallan, Nosamo (A Joyful Political Revolt, Nosamo)*, pp. 85-110. Seoul, Korea: Gaemagowon.
- Hwang, Balbina Y. 2003. "Defusing Anti-American Rhetoric in South Korea." *Research: Asia and Pacific*, The Heritage Foundation, January 23, 2003: 1-8.
- Jin, Duk-Kyu. 2001. "Democracy and the Ethical Foundation of Civil Society." *Korea Focus* 9: 100-112.
- Kang, Jung In. 2001. "Dilemma of Korean Conservatives." *Korea Focus* 9: 113-125.
- Kim, Hyuk-Rae. 2000. "The State and Civil Society in Transition: The Role of Non-governmental Organizations in South Korea." *The Pacific Review* 13(4): 595-613.
- Koo, Hagen. 2000. "The Dilemmas of Empowered Labor In Korea." *Asian Survey* 40(2): 227-250.
- Korea Now. "Conservative vs. Progressive." *Korea Now*, May 18, 2002: 5-6.
- Korea Now. "Protesters' Voices Heard." *Korea Now*, December 14, 2002: 8-9.
- Korea Now. "Roh Elected President." *Korea Now*, December 28, 2002: 5-11.

- Lee, Nam Young. 2002. "Generational Voting Patterns in Korea." *Korea Focus* 10: 63-80.
- Lee, Yeon-Ho. 2000. "The Failure of the Weak State in Economic Liberalization: Liberalization, Democratization and the Financial Crisis in South Korea." *The Pacific Review* 13(1): 115-131.
- Lim, Seong-Ho. 2002. "Presidential Elections and 'Migratory' Law Makers." *Korea Focus* 10: 19-22.
- Monthly Chosun, January 2003. "2002-nyŏn taet'nngnyŏng sŏn'gŏ wa sae taet'onngnyŏng ŭi kwaje (The 2002 Presidential Election and the Tasks of the New President)" 146-188.
- Moon, Kyongran. 2000. *Uri egerin kkum i itsumnida (We Have A Dream: One Hundred Day Drama of Voters' Revolution)*. Seoul, Korea: Nanam.
- Monthly Joongan, March 2003. "Han'guk sahoe esŏ ŭi internet ŭi pit kwa kŭrimja (The Light and Shadow of the Internet in South Korea)."
- Roh, Heikyong. 2002. *Yuk'waehan chŏngch'i pallan, Nosamo (A Joyful Political Revolt, Nasamo)*. Seoul, Korea: Gaemagowon.
- Shindonga, January 2003, "No mu-hyŏn sidae (The Roh Moo Hyun Era)" 94-213.
- Shin, Eui Hang. 1999. "Social Change, Political Elections, and the Middle Class in Korea." *East Asia: An International Quarterly*, 17: 28-60.
- Shin Eui Hang. 2001a. "Effects of the Korean War on Social Structures of the Republic of Korea." *International Journal of Korean Studies* 5: 133-158.
- Shin, Eui Hang. 2001b. "Political Demography of Korea: Political Effects of Changes in Population Composition and Distribution." *East Asia: An International Quarterly*, 19: 171-204.
- Shin, Eui Hang. 2003a. "The Role of NGOs in Political Elections in South Korea: The Case of the Citizens' Alliance for the 2000 General Election." *Asian Survey* 43(4): 697-715.
- Shin, Eui Hang. 2003b. "Correlates of the 2002 Presidential Election in South Korea: Regionalism, the Generation Gap, Anti-Americanism, and the North Korea Factor." An unpublished manuscript.
- Shin, Won. 2002. "Nosamo ka kyŏl On Gil (A History of Nosamo)." Heikyong Roh, ed., *Yuk'waehan chŏngch'i pallan, Nosamo (A Joyful Political Revolt, Nosamo)*, pp. 7-44. Seoul, Korea: Gaemagowon.
- Sohn, Hyock Jae. 2002. "Nosamo wa simin undong (Nosamo and Civil Movemnets)" Heikyong Roh, ed., *Yuk'waehan chŏngch'i pallan, Nosamo (A Joyful Political Revolt, Nosamo)*, pp. 239-273. Seoul, Korea: Gaemagowon.
- Steinberg, David I. 2000. "Korean Politics: The New and Old." Korea Economic Institute of America, ed., *The Two Koreas in 2000: Sustaining Recovery and Seeking Reconciliation*, pp. 53-61. Washington, D.C.: KEIA.
- Weekly Dong-A. "Special: Political Big Bang." Weekly Dong-A, 367, January 9, 2003: 22-39.
- Wein, Roland. 2000. "Civic Organizations under the Kim Dae Jung Government: Puppets or a New Political Force?" Korea Economic Institute of America, ed., *The Two Koreas in 2000: Sustaining Recovery and Seeking Reconciliation*, pp. 62-75. Washington, D.C.: KEIA
- Yoon, Sang Chul. 2002. "Nosamo wa kungmin kyŏngsŏn (Nosamo and Presidential primaries)." Heikyong Roh, ed., *Yuk'waehan chŏngch'i pallan, Nosamo (A Joyful*

Political Revolt, Nosamo), pp. 111-139. Korea: Gaemagowon.

EUI HANG SHIN is Professor of Sociology at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina. His research interests include political demography, internal migration, and adaptation process of Korean immigrants in the U.S. Recent work includes research on globalization and regionalization in trade relations, political elections in Korea, and the sociology of sports.

