

Draft for Comment

**Carothers? Critique of the Transition Paradigm: Korea as a Case in Point
or
The Netizens vs. the Conservative Print Media**

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Executive Summary of Paper

In this paper I hope to demonstrate that the critique presented by Thomas Carothers in his article "The End of the Transition Paradigm" in the Journal of Democracy (January 2002) provides a helpful perspective to use when investigating democratic processes using the Republic of Korea as a case study.

Carothers identifies a set of assumptions that he proposes are false but which are implicit to the transition paradigm. These assumptions briefly are:

- a) That there was a predictable democratization script that could be expected to unfold.
- b) That one could assume there would be a particular sequence of stages.
- c) That elections would not only provide legitimacy for government officials, but also would "continuously deepen political participation and accountability."
- d) That legacies from the autocratic period would not affect the democratization process.
- e) That the previous power holders would not lock in the power and resources they held.

He also provides a summary of the historical framework of how the 'transition paradigm' came to be dominant in the democracy promotion community. When his critique appeared, it met with criticism from a number of scholars. Carothers appears not to have desired to engage in polemics so he agreed to qualify his critique as intended to apply particularly to the community of foreign aid practitioners and left open the issue of how or if the critique had validity when applied to others who were involved with the widespread discussion and application of the transition paradigm.

Carothers defended the critique as useful for the aid community and presents an anecdote to indicate that it was welcomed by them, as opposed to the reception it received from scholars. (See for example, "A Reply to My Critics", Journal of Democracy, Vol. 13, No. 3, July 3, 2002, p. 37. Critiques of his original article are also in this issue of the Journal of Democracy)

Despite the original reception to Carothers' article, however, it has had an impact. For example, in his recent article, "Democratization: Perspectives from Global Citizenries" (Center for the Study of Democracy, 2006), Doh C. Shin writes:

"In policy circles democracy is too often equated with the holding of free and competitive multiparty elections (Carothers 2002). The electoral conception of democracy, however, does not provide a full account of the process that transforms age-old authoritarian institutions into democratically functioning

ones. This conception provides only a minimalist account because it deals merely with the process of elections and overlooks additional important institutions of democracy. It is formalistic or superficial because it fails to consider how democratically or undemocratically these institutions actually perform. It also provides a static account of institutional democratization because it ignores interactions between various democratic institutions between each round of elections." (Shin, p. 4)

Shin proposes that the task is to consider the alternative conceptions of democracy proposed by scholars to overcome the minimalist nature of electoral democracy.

I have found Carothers critique helpful in my research investigating the processes of democratization and their relation to the history and impact of Internet development. I am particularly interested in exploring if and how the Internet can help to extend democracy. South Korea is the country with the most widespread broadband access. It presents scholars with a chance to understand the practical and potential impact that the Internet and widespread broadband access can have on democratization as it spreads to other countries and regions of the world.

In this paper, I focus on two areas that Carothers identifies as important for the study and observation of democratization. These areas are the identification of the vested interests that remain from the autocratic period and the actual experience of elections and citizen participation in politics.

One such vested interest is that represented by the conservative print media as exemplified in the mainstream press in Korea. This institution has played a particularly harmful role in politics when they are able to dominate the formation of public opinion and limit it to the projection of the narrow set of the interests they represent.

The events of the 2002 presidential election campaign provide the basis for a case study of a power struggle between the conservative print media and online discussion by netizens on the Internet. In this election campaign, criticism in the print media stirred interest in Roh Moo-hyun, whose candidacy was considered to be a long shot. Responses to the print articles were posted on the Internet. The narrow focus of the print media was countered with a broad discussion online of the issues of the election. This discussion was carried on over a variety of online forms, including discussion groups, on line polemics, and an online newspaper which introduced a new form of journalism known as citizen journalism.

Also a new form of online political organization was created by netizens, a form of fan club which was named Nosamo. Nosamo (Korean for "those who love Roh Moo-hyun) was created to support the candidacy of the Roh Moo-hyun. A tenet of this organization was its commitment to participatory democracy. The online environment on the Internet made it possible for netizens to play an active role as citizens in the election, participating in the discussion and debate of the 2002 presidential campaign.

The victory of Roh in the election was also a victory for the vibrant participatory process the Internet and netizens had made possible.

I argue that a new online political culture was created in this election campaign and hence this experience serves as an important example of democratization, and of the appropriateness of Carother's advice to raise the

question, "what is happening politically?" in place of the previous question, "How is the democratic transition going?"

I - Preface

The mass demonstrations in France in 2005 in opposition to the youth employment law (CNE) and the 2005 mass demonstrations in Nepal protesting the actions of the monarchy, are a sign that there is serious dissatisfaction with the political processes in both developed countries like France and developing countries like Nepal. Such examples of mass dissatisfaction help to highlight the widespread desire for democratic political processes.

In a similar vein, a report issued recently in Great Britain titled "Power to the People: The report of Power An Independent Inquiry into Britain's Democracy documents a deepening public dissatisfaction with the political processes in Great Britain and the U.S." (1)

Thus even in the countries long considered to be models of democracy, the democratic practices are the subject of serious discontent. In light of such dissatisfaction with the old models of democracy, the efforts of countries that have recently thrown out autocratic systems and are now searching for how to develop and sustain a democratizing process, become especially interesting and relevant subjects for study. Some scholars of democratization, for example, John Markoff, propose that innovations to craft new forms or processes of democratization will develop from the waves of innovation going on in these countries. (1a)

In my paper I will explore certain aspects of the current democratization process in South Korea (officially known as the Republic of Korea, but hereafter referred to most often as Korea).

II - Carothers' Critique of the Transition Paradigm

Given what is acknowledged by some to be a crisis of democracy around the world, it is not surprising that serious questions are being raised about what had been considered a model or what will be the processes by which how a newly democratizing country could be expected to develop.

One useful critique has been developed by Thomas Carothers, in his article "The End of the Transition Paradigm." Describing the origin and impetus for what he calls the 'transition paradigm', Carothers explains how in the 1980s U.S. policy makers desired a model to apply to newly democratizing countries in their official democracy promotion work. He writes:

"As early as the mid-1980s, President Ronald Reagan, Secretary of State George Shultz, and other high-level U.S. officials were referring regularly to "the worldwide democratic revolution." During the 1980s, an active array of governmental, quasi-governmental, and nongovernmental organizations devoted to promoting democracy abroad sprang into being. This new democracy-promotion community had a pressing need for an analytic framework to conceptualize and respond to the ongoing political events....(Carothers 2002: 6) (2)

In response, a model for the democratizing process that Carothers calls the 'transition paradigm' was advanced which has been applied by scholars. In recent years, however, Carothers argues that a number of problems have become obvious

with the 'transition paradigm'. This has led him to declare, "It is time for the democracy-promotion community to discard the transition paradigm." (3)

He argues that researchers interested in democratization need to shed the lens colored by these prior assumptions. When analyzing the democratization process in a country, he proposes that instead of asking, "How is its democratic transition going?", the question researchers should ask is, "What is happening politically?" (Carothers 2002: 18)

South Korea provides the example of a country that has made significant progress with democratization since its June 1987 revolution. Therefore, it provides a useful case study to explore whether Carothers' critique of the transition paradigm can be helpful in analyzing democratization.

In this paper, I focus mainly on developments in Korea which took place during the 2002 presidential election campaign. This campaign resulted in the nomination and then election of Roh Moo Hyun as the 16th President of South Korea.

Roh's election, I will argue, demonstrates in a salient way, democratic processes that I believe it is critical to consider in trying to understand both the theory and practice of democratization.

These processes, I contend, are related to the ability of the people at a grassroots level, to have a means of influencing what those who are in positions of power will do. There are various means of wielding such influence. For the purposes of this paper, however, I want to focus on what for the time being I will call the "power of the press". (Eventually I hope to develop this concept further to include the ability for the press to function as a "watchdog" overseeing and affecting the actions of government, and more specifically, of government officials.) (See for example, Michael Hauben, "The Computer as Democratizer" in "Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet", 1997, p. 315-316, John H. McManus, "Market-Driven Journalism: Let the Citizen Beware?", 1994, p. xi)

What the 2002 election in Korea demonstrated, was that if the people have a means of communicating with each other, and of discussing the activities of those who are wielding the power in their society, then there is a potential for the concept of democracy to have a practical meaning beyond the general normative ideal.

The definition of democracy that I am using for this paper is the processes by which people have a means to affect the decisions of those in power that will affect their lives.

When considering this particular process of democracy, I am taking into consideration the definition that Tilly offers (Tilly 2005):

"In the political-process definition that strikes me as most useful for explanatory purposes, democracy combines four elements: 1) relatively broad public political participation; 2) relatively equal participation; 3) binding consultation of political participants with respect to state policies, resources, and personnel; and 4) protection of political participants (especially members of minorities) from arbitrary action by state agents. Without effective citizenship, no regime provides sufficient breadth, equality,

binding consultation, or protection of participants in public politics to qualify as democratic."

In this context, however, I want to focus on the problem represented by #3 in the above definition. I want to propose that there is a problem in relationship between the state agents and the political participants which is a crucial problem to explore in considering the problems of democratization.

The events of the election campaign provide useful experience to consider in trying to come to grips with the problems and achievements of democratization in Korea.

When considering Carothers' critique of the transition paradigm, one is struck by the fact that newly democratizing countries don't start out with a clean slate when they make the transition to democratization. Instead it can be expected that they will inherit at least some of the forms and power structures from their past. These countries have a handicap, the handicap of having to root out the surviving remnants of the political and economic authoritarian past. How they do this and what new forms and structures they find to replace the vestiges of the surviving autocratic system is a subject worthy of study.

III - Forms and Structures from Korea's Autocratic Past

A number of scholars of Korean democratization are concerned with these surviving remnants of the autocratic system and their continuing impact on the economy and politics of Korea. One such scholar is Choi Jang Jip, a Professor at Korea University, and the author of the book "Democracy after Democratization" (2005). Choi discusses how the holders of power from the autocratic period of Korean history, have continued to dominate Korean politics and economics after the 1987 Revolution. A major subject for his study are the structures supporting the continuing hegemony of the conservatives over Korean political and economic life. Among the strata that Choi is worried about are the chaebols, the conservative newspapers, and the conservative intellectuals. The conservative intellectuals he is referring to are those who "do not criticize the media and chaebol. Nor do they show any interest in the groups and social classes being victimized in the process of the entrenchment of the class structure." (Choi 2005: 48)

Choi argues that the forces who have continued from the authoritarian period that dominated post WWII Korea until June 1987, are those who "resist change". He proposes that they "have become gradually more organized and stronger." (Choi 2005: 49)

In evaluating the progress made in Korean society since the June 1987 revolution, Choi argues that conditions have gotten worse for people, rather than improving. He explains that it is no longer likely that hard work and education will make it possible for most people to advance in their society. (Choi 2005: 41)

Hong Yun-Gi is another researcher interested in the nature of the power block that has emerged from the autocratic post WWII period. Hong writes:

"The ruling group of the post-war order included extreme-right [wing] anti communist politicians, conglomerate capitalist groups called chaebol, military forces of politicized generals and

officials, and the three largest newspapers, i.e. Chosun Ilbo, Joong Ang Ilbo and Dong A Ilbo. The social power of these groups survived the process of democratic consolidation which dissolved the system of formal military dictatorship in the June revolt of 1987." (Hong 2003: 8)

In his critique of this power block, Choi particularly emphasizes the role that the conservative press plays in Korean politics. Choi argues:

"The political agenda in Korea is set by the press, not initiated by the political parties. It is also the press that determines policy issues and priorities. From the President to members of the National Assembly, from cabinet ministers to political advisors, to ranking bureaucrats...the most they do in terms of making any decisions is to make decisions based on the expectation of how the press would evaluate such decisions." (Choi 2005: 41)

This may be a bit of an exaggeration, but it suggests the central importance in Korean politics of the press. Choi also criticizes how the press functions with respect to private individuals, "(I)t arbitrarily intervenes and defines a person's intellectual and emotional spheres, calling a person 'ideologically suspicious' or 'leftist' as they see fit. The press freely conducts ideological inquisitions that one would credit to the Japanese colonial rulers or a totalitarian regime." (Choi 2005: 41)

The effect of the conservative domination of the print press, Choi explains, is that public opinion becomes the views expressed in a few large powerful newspapers. This narrows the range of political and ideological viewpoints that are reflected as the public opinion of Korean society. (Choi 2005: 43)

Some scholars writing about the struggle for democratization in South Korea explain that it was not until 1997, ten years after the June 1987 victory, that there was an actual transfer of political power to opposition parties. Even with this transfer, however, the conservative media is presented as one of the contenders for what form any reform of the political system will take. According to another researcher, Chang Woo Young, after the June 1987 victory, rather than the conservative media being curtailed, it emerged as an "independent political institution." (Chang 2005: 928)

Others emphasize the need to reform the conservative media. "Without the reform of the media, no success of democratic reform is possible," argues Cho Hu Yeon, one of the founders of the civil society NGO People's Solidarity with Participatory Democracy (PSPD).

The failure to put through reforms of the structure of the chaebols and of the conservative media has been seen as a factor contributing to the economic crisis of 1997.

While South Korean Presidents Kim Young Sam and then Kim Dae Jung had promised to uproot the conservative power base, and several of the measures Sam took when he came to office, did indeed make some impact, the financial crisis of 1997 is attributed to the fact that not nearly enough progress had been made.

For example, Sunhyuk Kim writes:

"There is currently an extensive consensus in and outside of Korea that the economic crisis could have been avoided had Kim Young

Sam's chaebol reform been successfully carried out." (Kim 2000: 28)

Similarly, "mainstream South Korean news outlets failed to apply a critical eye to economic reporting before the Asian slump." As one reporter explains, this lack of criticism is "a fact that many analysts say contributed to the crash." Among the mechanisms considered responsible for the crisis, he proposes is the fact that, "We were guilty of printing government statements without checking the facts." (4)

Describing the press during this period, David I. Steinberg notes the widespread conformity of opinion, and the ownership and or control of major media by the powerful economic conglomerates known as chaebols. Steinberg characterizes the nature of the press by a set of statistics he offers to show the lack of independent reporting. He writes:

"some 97.8 percent of political news, 76.5 percent of social news, and 75.5 percent of economic news are said to be press releases by the government or other interested parties." (Steinberg, Paper presented June 15, 1996, "The Media: A Major Actor in Civil Society, p. 221-222) (5)

The conservative newspapers most often cited as the problem are "Chosun Ilbo", "Donga Ilbo", and "Joongang Ilbo". Chosun Ilbo (Daily Newspaper) was started March 5, 1920. It has a reputation as the South Korean print newspaper with the largest circulation (2,383,429 in 2004). The 2nd largest newspaper is Dong Ilbo, started in April 5, 1920. (In 2004 its circulation was given as 2,088,715) (Lee, Gunho 2004: 6)

These three major newspapers, have a market share of 70%, explains Lee Eun-Jeung. (Lee, Eun-Jeung: 624) She quotes Sisa Journal, 5 January 2002 "Never had a politician won elections against the will of these newspapers." (Lee, Eun-Jeung, 634)

In this context the success of the electoral campaign of Roh Moo-Hyun, which was bitterly opposed by the major conservative print publications takes on an added significance. What was the nature of his campaign and how did it succeed despite the opposition of the major conservative print publications?

IV - Roh Moo Hyun's Election Campaign

Roh's background was unusual for someone who would run for the office of President of South Korea. He had come from a farming family. He completed high school, but never attended college. He studied on his own to take the National Bar Exam. Passing the exam, Roh was licensed to practice law. Soon afterwards he became interested in helping students who had been prosecuted for their opposition to the autocratic government. Roh also supported labor activists. He was from Busan but had not been able to win a National Assembly seat from the area.

By the 2000 National Assembly election, Roh was able to win a seat in an area around Seoul. But he gave it up to run again for a seat in Busan in an effort to challenge the harmful impact of regional divisions in Korean political parties and politics. When Roh lost the April 2000 election, however, his efforts attracted discussion on his website among a number of people interested in election reform. Through their online discussion the idea was presented to create an online fan club for Roh, like the fan clubs for sports teams.

Formed in April 2000, Nosamo, the first online fan club for a political candidate, began discussion about how to support Roh as a candidate in the upcoming election for the South Korean presidency.

On May 12, 2000, the NGO People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) held an online poll to see which of several candidates was most desired. The candidates included in the poll were Rhee In-je, a representative to the National Assembly and an advisor to the Millennium Democratic Party (MDP), Lee Hoi-chang, the head of the Grand National Party, and Roh Moo-Hyun, who appeared as the underdog, the candidate who was least likely to be able to win the election for the presidency. Yet Roh won the PSPD poll.

The election campaign for the presidency started out, however, with the appearance that it would follow the form and practice of previous campaigns. The Grand National Party candidate seemed destined for victory. In January 2002, he had visited the U.S. and met with high level U.S. officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney. The Grand National Party at the time held the majority of seats in the National Assembly, 150 of 272. Also the GNP had scored a victory of the Millennium Democratic Party of Kim Dae Jung (the lame duck President) in the June 2002 local elections, winning 11 of 16 races for mayors and governors. (Steinberg)

Until March 2002, Roh Moo-hyun was polling much behind Lee Hoi-chang according to polls like one reported on March 5, 2002 by Chosun Ilbo. Lee Hoi-Chang got 38.7% of the vote, and Roh Moo-hyun, 25.2%.

In online publications, however, other signs were available that the election was going to be more of a close race than apparent in the print press. An online publication, Digital Times, as early as February 2002, showed Roh ahead of Lee. (Seongyi)

In April 2002 Nosamo held a meeting in a computer cafe in Busan. A hundred people attended the meeting. Han Sang-jin reports that using the Internet, the online newspaper OhmyNews, broadcast "live the inaugural meeting of the club held in Daejeon on June 6, 2000 through the Internet." (Han Sang-jin 2004a, p.8) An organization was formed to support Roh's candidacy. Its founding documents included a section committing Nosamo to participatory democracy.

A significant aspect of the election campaign for Roh, however, was the fact that his candidacy was strongly opposed by the conservative print press. For example, during the primary election, the major newspapers "almost everyday carried articles that both implicitly and explicitly criticized candidate Roh Moo-hyun," writes Yun Young Min in his article, "An Analysis of Cyber-Electioneering: Focusing on the 2002 Presidential Election in Korea." (Yun 2003: 154)

Surprisingly, however, the attacks by the print media served to increase the public's interest in Roh and his campaign. As Yun documents, "As a result more and more voters must have wondered to themselves 'Just Who Is This Roh Moo-hyun?'" In his study of the online activity on the Internet during the 2002 election, Yun documents the "sharp increase in the number of visits to Roh's Web site. Also, that must have been the reason," Yun writes, "why 'Roh Moo-hyun' became one of the most popular search terms in the news section of portal sites." (Yun 2003: 154)

Describing the effect that the criticism of Roh by the major newspapers had, Yun writes that it was akin to a David and Goliath effect with Roh being regarded as the brave David able to slay the more powerful Goliath.

Lee Eun Jeung describes how attacks on Roh that appeared in the conservative print media were quick to draw responses and discussion in online newspapers and discussion forums. If there was a reference in the print media to a speech that Roh gave, the whole speech would be posted online with a response to the article that had appeared in the print media.

Similarly, online discussions were common and supporters of Roh would send each other articles they found of interest. The online discussion and exchange of views found particular favor among the younger generations who had previously found politics uninteresting.

Yun observes that a feedback system was created between the articles published in the conservative major print publications and the comments and discussion that occurred online. (Yun 2003: 163) Lee Eun-jeung argues that the election of 2002 "was a power struggle between the main print media and the Internet." (Lee, Eun-Jeung: 634)

"In 2002 for the first time in Korean history," she writes, "the power of the so-called netizen ('citizen on the net') made itself felt." (Lee Eun-Jeung: 632) There were several well-publicized netizen actions in 2002. These included the online protest waged against the disqualification of the Korean track athlete in the Winter Olympics; the netizen directed celebration during the World Cup events in Korea in June 2002; and the candlelight protests against the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in November and December 2002. The victory of Roh in the 2002 election was but one example of Korean netizens exploring how the Internet could be helpful in their efforts to have an impact on Korean politics.

V - Role of the Netizen in Election Campaign

In his summary of his research about the impact of the online activity during the 2002 election, Yun observes that prior to the election, most experts would have assumed that it was impossible for Roh to win. But after the election, these same experts would have to agree that the Internet had played a significant role in the victory. (Yun 2003, 163) Though he is cautious about claiming causality without further study, Yun proposes that the "so-called experts" should also exert caution when making their predictions about "such events in the future." (Yun 2003: 163)

Yun's analysis is most cogent, however, when he considers the significance of Roh's victory. He writes:

Cyberspace is making it possible for citizens to choose a political position free from the influence of the mainstream press.... Public opinion, which has been almost exclusively minted by a few mass media, can no longer be hidden beneath the control of the press. The...effect is expected to break the old equation, 'the opinion of the press = public opinion = prevailing opinion.' (Yun 2003: 143)

Lee Eun-jeung's assessment similarly is that something important has happened. "In a sense the netizens mobilized themselves into the political realm," she writes, "exercising their power as citizens..." (Lee, Eun-Jeung: 635) She

continues, "With their electoral revolution the netizens had transformed political culture in Korea." (Lee, Eun-Jeung: 638)

VI - Nosamo and OhmyNews - New Online Institutional Forms

In order to consider the significance of the 2002 Korean Presidential election, it will be helpful to examine two of the new online forms that played a particularly significant role.

The first is Nosamo, the online fan club created to build support for Roh.

The Nosamo Roho fan club was started by Jeong Ki Lee (User ID: Old Fox) on April 15, 2000 (Jangwoo Han, p. 15). (Note: The Nosamo fan club is also referred to by the name Rohsamo. Nosamo stands for "those who love Roh" -ed).

The fan club had members both internationally and locally with online and offline activities organized among the participants. When Nosamo was created, a goal of the organization was participatory democracy.

Explaining how the participatory process works, Kim et al provide an example from Nosamo's experience (Kim et al 2004, p.4):

Their internal discussion making process was a microcosm of participatory democracy in practice. All members voted on a decision following open deliberations in forums for a given period of time. Opinions were offered in this process in order to effect changes to the decision on which people were to vote.

Such online discussion and decision making was demonstrated when members of Roh's fan club disagreed with his decision to send Korean troops to Iraq in support of the US invasion. Even though they were members of a fan club, they didn't feel obligated to support every action of the Roh Presidency. The fan club members held an online discussion and vote on their web site about the US war in Iraq. They issued a public statement opposing the decision to send Korean troops to Iraq.

Young-ho Kim reports that initially, Nosamo had 40 members. They shared certain political goals, which included challenging the conservative press's domination over Korean politics. They also opposed regional loyalty as the basis for electoral success in Korean politics.

The meeting launching Nosamo was held in a PC Bang in Daejeon. Over 100 people attended it and it was broadcast live by OhmyNews. Instead of following the model of political party organization, Nosamo was organized at a local level, sponsoring local activities among its netizen population. Their activities included trips to the country's highest mountains, holding campfires on local beaches and bicycling and walking between two politically antagonistic regional cities, Busan and Gwangju. (Kim Young-ho, p. 5)

Nosamo's activities were mainly organized online but included lots of offline political and social activity. Nosamo began to draw attention from those who didn't know of its online existence when members of Nosamo worked to help Roh Moo-hyun win the newly instituted primary in the Millennium Democratic Party (MDP).

Trying to win mass support for the party, the MDP instituted its first open primary election to choose its Presidential nominee. Rotating open primaries were held in different cities and provinces from January through April 2002. At first Roh was considered an underdog among the MDP candidates. He came in 3rd in the first primary, but then 2nd in the 2nd primary. By the 3rd primary, held in Gwangju, he came in first. (Kim Young-ho, p. 5) Nosamo's online membership had found the means to gain support for Roh, helped by the open nature of the primary. In April 2002 Roh won the MDP's formal nomination.

Even though Roh had the party's official nomination, however, he had little formal support from the MDP organization. Nosamo reorganized to provide a more formal organizational form for their presidential candidate. They used their online structure to raise funds for Roh, and to organize and carry out a vigorous online and offline campaign.

At one point, Roh made an agreement with another Presidential candidate, Chung Mong-joon, to hold a TV debate and the winner of the debate would run against the GNP candidate. Though Roh had trailed Chung some of the time in the polls, and trailed Lee through much of this campaign period, his Nosamo supporters made sure to be available to be polled about who won the debate. Roh emerged from the TV debate with a score of 46.8% in favor, to 42.4% for Chung. Now the challenge facing Roh was to prevail over Lee.

Another important influence, however, developed, which would play an important role in winning Roh the Presidential office. This influence was OhmyNews.

OhmyNews

In order to understand the events of November and December 2002, and Roh's victory over Lee in the election on December 19, 2002, it will be helpful to know something about the creation and development of the online newspaper OhmyNews.

OhmyNews officially began publication on February 22, 2000. Its founder, Oh Yeon Ho, was a journalist working with the Monthly Mal magazine, an alternative Korean language publication, and helping to train young journalists. In his autobiography, Oh explains that he began OhmyNews to correct the serious media imbalance in Korea that he had experienced as a Mal journalist. If Oh did a significant story in Mal, it would get little media attention, while stories in Chosun Ilbo would be spotlighted. Oh sought to create a more balanced media environment in Korea where the significance of the news, not the strength of the media organization, would determine what was considered as news.

In starting OhmyNews, as he called this new online newspaper, Oh introduced one particularly significant innovation. This was the practice that "every citizen is a reporter." Oh started with a small paid staff for OhmyNews, but he welcomed articles contributed by what he called "citizen reporters". By the time OhmyNews began officially, he had 727 citizen reporters registered with OhmyNews.

In one stroke, Oh had abolished the boundary between active journalists and passive readers. Readers could be journalists. The staff still covered stories important to have in the paper, but the staff, or at least a part of it, served as editors to publish the articles by the citizen reporters. Also OhmyNews paid its citizen reporters a small amount of money depending on how prominently the article they submitted was placed in the OhmyNews online newspaper.

While there are a number of other aspects of OhmyNews worthy of attention, the purpose of this paper is to explore the democratic processes that online forms like OhmyNews provide for our times. In this vein, there are a number of articles where the staff or citizen reporters contributed to the success of the Roh campaign. The post by the citizen reporter with the login AngMA, however, is the instance I want to focus on.

First, though some background. In June 2002, 2 middle school girls were killed when an armored vehicle driven by two U.S. service men ran over the girls. In June 2002, most Koreans were focused on the world cup celebrations and cheering that proved a particularly significant event for many Koreans.

But by November 2002, there was a clear desire among many Koreans that the service men driving the armored vehicle should be punished. The Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the US and Korea, however, provided that the soldiers be tried by the U.S. government, instead of under Korean law. Much attention was focused on the U.S. military proceedings held to try the soldiers. A documentary was shown on TV in Korea. The soldiers were found not guilty under the U.S. legal proceedings. A few hours after watching the documentary, an OhmyNews citizen reporter, AngMA, posted a message on the Internet.

His message said:

"We are owners of Korea. We are Koreans who deserve to be able to walk in Gwanghwamun (Gwanghwamun is where the US embassy is located and it was off limits for Koreans) I cried when I watch the TV documentary broadcast of the event, because until now I didn't understand those who struggle so strongly.

It is said that dead men's souls become fireflies. Let's fill downtown with our souls, with the souls of Mi-seon and Hyo-soon. Let's become thousands of fireflies this coming Saturday and Sunday. Let's sacrifice our private comfortable lives. Please light your candle at your home. If somebody asks, please answer, "I'm going to commemorate my dead sisters." Holding candles and wearing black, let's have a memorial ceremony for them.

Let's walk in Gwanghwamun holding a lighted candle. Let's commemorate the lives of Mi-seon and Hyo-soon, who were forgotten in the joy of June. Will the police prevent us? (Even if they forbid it, I will walk in Gwanghwamun, even if the police attack me.

We are not Americans who revenge violence with more violence. Even if only one person comes, it's ok. I will be happy to say hello. I will talk about the future of Korea in which Mi-seon and Hyo-soon can take a comfortable rest.

I'll go on, this week, next week, the following week. Let's fill the Gwanghwamun with our candle-light. Let's put out the American's violence with our peace."

Based on a translation by Lee Jinsun ("Network of Civic Participation, A Case Study of Alternative Medium 'OhmyNews'" in Korea, unpublished paper)

AngMA posted this on November 28, 2002 at 4 am in the morning. This was five hours after he had seen the TV documentary. He originally posted this at 3 different online sites. The next day he posted it at OhmyNews. Thousands of

people (10,000) appeared at the first candlelight vigil for the two dead girls. This was, Lee Jinsun writes, "the first national rally organized by an ordinary individual through the Internet." (Lee, p. 20)

In her paper, Lee Jinsun describes the online debate and discussion over the nature of the demonstrations that appeared on OhmyNews. She writes:

"OhmyNews was not only a mediator which concerns online discussion or offline political activities but also a stage on which counter-hegemonic positions are generated. For example, regarding the second rally on November 30, 2002, OhmyNews users left 1410 of their comments and opinions. There was an intense debate around the issues of anti-American and pro-American standpoints" (Lee Jinsun, p. 20).

Also the debate went on, particularly around the issues of whether the organization of the demonstrations should be done in a nonhierarchical or hierarchical fashion. AngMA and his supports argued for nonhierarchical processes and organizational forms, while some on the committee organizing the demonstrations supported a hierarchical structure.

VII Implications

While the details of the rich online experience in Korea are important to investigate, certain general characteristics emerge which point toward some general concepts. One significant aspect is that the nonhierarchical form of the online experience contrasts sharply with the hierarchical institutional forms that many Koreans are faced with offline. Similarly, the ability to speak up and express one's opinions ("just my 2 cents" as some online are fond of saying) is a welcome change from other aspects of Korean life and experience. Discussion and debate online have functioned as catalysts for offline organization and demonstrations. Describing the rich array of online forms, Chang Woo-young writes:

"[T]he progressive camp has taken initiatives in the cyberspace by using various types of online media including PC communication communities, closed user groups (CUGs), independent Internet newspapers, political webzines, portal sites for social movements, fan clubs sites of political leaders, and 'anti' sites (Chang Woo-young, 2005a)

Yet when one reads analyses of what is happening in terms of democratization in Korea, the focus is most often on the weakness of the political party structures, or the danger of a strong civil society developing without an adequate institutional structure or that online users are interfering with the privacy of users. On the surface there seems to be little attention to the online new democratic processes and the potential they represent for creating new democratic forms like those Markoff predicts will be on the horizon.

AngMA's post, however, is a helpful example of the netizen's ability to breach the boundary between the concerns of the individual netizen and the decisions that are being made that will affect one's life. By his posts, AngMA was able to have an impact on those decisions in a way not otherwise usually possible.

Similarly, both OhmyNews and Nosamo, as hybrid online and offline forms, provide a means for netizens to be part of changing institutional forms. South Korea, as an example of a society where there is much broadband access, is a place where these new forms can be explored and lessons learned about their nature and

potential for crafting new democratic processes. Such lessons can be helpful elsewhere if the details are known and lessons shared.

The form of Nosamo is a form to be understood for those who are interested in the processes of democracy, rather than the call to create in Korea a U.S. style political party, as I have seen referred to in the democratization literature about South Korea. Similarly, the processes pioneered by OhmyNews and other online media offer a means of expanding the news and views that defines our society. Yet these are hybrid forms, which need to be documented and analyzed, not ignored or blindly admired.

More specifically, the phenomenon of the netizen, which my co-author Michael Hauben observed online in 1992-1993 and which he provided with a consciousness as a significant new identity, is a phenomenon being developed further in Korea. It is a worthy subject of study to understand whether and how the netizen in Korea is a manifestation of characteristics similar to those Hauben observed in his research in the early 1990s. (See Hauben and Hauben, "Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet" and also "The Rise of Netizen Democracy" A case study of netizens' impact on democracy in South Korea")

VIII

Carothers' advice to look at "what is happening politically" when trying to understand the experience in a newly democratizing country like South Korea helps to remove the filters from one's glasses so that one can see new and previously unknown developments.

Something fundamental occurred during the 2002 presidential campaign in South Korea. Citizens found a way to turn the election campaign into a citizens' event. They became actively involved in debating and exploring the issues that were raised. It wasn't only the candidates or the elites and their newspapers that participated in the debates. To the contrary, articles in the conservative print media about the Roh candidacy were subjected to scrutiny, and citizens could respond in both discussion forums and online newspapers. Citizens had reclaimed their role as participants in the election process, rather than being resigned to the status of passive observers. The citizenry also became watchdogs of the process, as well as participants. They were able to contribute to and spread the discussion among other citizens.

It is reported that 70% of the South Korean population has access to high speed Internet. Thus a far larger percentage of the Korean population can contribute online to the discussion of politics than the limited number of writers who can be published in the conservative print media. Also the Internet provides a much broader range of views and discussion on various issues than any print media can make available. Even if one doesn't choose to contribute articles and discussion to be available online, one can read a much broader range of viewpoints than one can read in the print media. From the controversy of ideas that developed during the 2002 election campaign, netizens were able to develop a more broad based perspective of the salient issues.

Carothers refers to an article by Dankwart Rustow "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model" which was published in 1970, as a seminal article in the early academic transition literature. (Carothers, 2002: 8) In this article, Rustow raises the question "What conditions make democracy possible and what conditions make it thrive?" This, I want to argue is a critical question for social scientists and other researchers who are trying to develop a theoretical analysis of democracy. Rustow begins a process of exploring the genesis of a

democratic society by a study of the origins and development of democratization in Turkey and in Sweden. Rustow's conclusion is that democratization is not about establishing maximum "consensus" but rather about creating an environment where dissention thrives. (Rustow 1970: 363)

The 2002 presidential campaign in South Korea was an important development in the democratization of Korea. Out of the debate and dissention, emerged a broader form of public opinion than hitherto available in Korea. It is therefore an experience that merits serious attention from the community of scholars interested in democratization.

Notes

(1) Power to the People: The report of Power: an independent inquiry into Britain's democracy. London, 2006 <http://www.powerinquiry.org/report/index.php>

(2) He also writes:

"Confronted with the initial parts of the third wave -- democratization in Southern Europe, Latin America, and a few countries in Asia (especially the Philippines) -- the U.S. democracy community rapidly embraced an analytic model of democratic transition. It was derived principally from their own interpretation of the patterns of democratic change taking place, but also to a lesser extent from the early works of the emergent academic field of 'transitology,' above all the seminal work of Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter." (Carothers 2002: 6)

(3) See Carothers 2002, p. 14-17. He lists what he proposes are five false assumptions of the 'transition paradigm'. These assumptions briefly are:

a) That there was a predictable democratization script that could be expected to unfold.

b) That one could assume there would be a particular sequence of stages.

c) That elections would not only provide legitimacy for government officials, but also would "continuously deepen political participation and accountability." (Carothers, p. 15)

d) That legacies from the autocratic period would not affect the democratization process.

e) That the previous power holders would not lock in the power and resources they held.

(4) Committee to Protect Journalists Country Report, December 31, 1998.

(5) Describing the media in 1995, Steinberg writes:

"Although the media may seem to be extremely critical of an administration, excessive negative coverage more likely represents a feeding frenzy after administrative anomalies have already been brought to light. There is little investigative reporting. Through advertising which now accounts for about 90 percent of press revenue, as well as some important press ownership, the chaebol play an inordinately large role in how the press respond to political issues. (p. 34 of 40)

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