

Cyberactivism and Political Empowerment in Civil Society: A Comparative Analysis of Korean Cases

Chang Woo-Young and Lee Won-Tae

Abstract

In the major elections of the 2000s, some civic groups of Korea experimented with cyberactivism, a new form of social movement. In the case of Korea, the elections of the 2000s were held amid a new structure characterized by the democratization and informatization that facilitated the big bang of civil society. The structure of political opportunities can function as a precondition or momentum that vitalizes social movements. A remarkable form of social movement that has emerged in the new structure of political opportunities is cyberactivism. Strategies of the civic groups that are based on the effective use of cyberspace are generating great waves of transformation in the organization, goals, and effects of social movements. In particular, the cases analyzed in this study show that the political effects of cyberactivism greatly increase in electoral moments. Furthermore, the implications of cyberactivism will greatly affect our understanding of participatory democracy. It is from this perspective that the present study will carry out a comparative analysis of the characteristics of cyberactivism using the cases of CAGE (Citizens' Alliance for the 2000 General Election) and Nosamo.

Keywords: CAGE, cyberactivism, cyberspace, Nosamo, structure of political opportunities

Chang Woo-Young (Jang, U-yeong) is Senior Researcher of Institute of Social Science at the Sogang University. His published work has currently included "The Internet, Alternative Public Sphere and Political Dynamism: Korea's non-gaek websites" (2005). E-mail: chang0824@hanmail.net.

Lee Won-Tae (Yi Won-tae) is Research Fellow and PR Consultant at the Government Information Agency. His publications include "Internet Populism and Democracy in Korea" (2006). E-mail: wtlee84@hanmail.net.

Raising the Problems

In major elections of the 2000s, some civic groups of Korea have experimented with cyberactivism, a new form of social movement. Elections function as both important forums and political opportunities where citizens can express their interests and demands in a concentrated manner. In liberal democratic systems, extremely unstable political alliances may occur during elections. When the political elite faces external pressures or looks for allies during the electoral phase, groups engaged in social movements can enjoy a new structure of political opportunities. In the case of Korea, the elections of the 2000s were held amid a new structure characterized by the democratization and informatization that facilitated the big bang of civil society. The structure of political opportunities can function as a precondition or momentum that vitalizes social movements. The two macro-level changes of democratization and informatization have nurtured new methods and strategies for social movements in Korea.

The progression of democratization and informatization in Korea has stimulated the development of cyberactivism and forged a link between civic groups and information and communication technologies (ICTs). Particular political forces cannot monopolize benefits of democratization and informatization as the opportunities may favor all groups that are interested in active use of the changing context. Strategies of some civic groups that are based on the effective use of cyberspace are generating great waves of transformation in the organization, goals, and effects of social movements. In particular, the cases analyzed in this study show that the political effects of cyberactivism greatly increase in electoral moments. Furthermore, the implications of cyberactivism, which are essentially based on voluntary online organization and political mobilization, will greatly affect our understanding of participatory democracy.

Since the late 1990s, online political participation and social movements have noticeably increased in Korea with the rapid growth of the Internet. It is from this background that studies of Internet-based social movement were published over the last few years in the

fields of social science, including political science and sociology. The studies argue that the Internet has diversified methods of social movements and enhanced their effectiveness. The most representative research involving this topic include that conducted by Uhm and Hague (2001), Ko Dong-hyun (2003), and Jeong Dong-gyu (2003). Hague and Uhm (2001) carried out a comparative analysis of websites of political parties and netizens' political use of the Internet in civil society organizations (CSOs). They pointed out that websites of major political parties alienated citizens by using the Internet as the only means of political marketing. They also argued that the role of CSO websites was increasing because of existing political forces' inability to satisfy demands put forward by citizens. Ko Dong-hyun (2003) performed a comparative analysis of the online single-issue movement and online alternative culture community. He argued that Korea's online social movement, which was taking root as an alternative movement, was successful in raising issues and mobilizing citizens. Finally, Jeong Dong-gyu (2003) analyzed the case of the Nosamo and argued that political participation based on the online-offline networking method was being vitalized.

In the meanwhile, other researchers released research with the purpose of offering a balanced review of the strengths and weaknesses of online social movements. Yun Seong-yi (2003) analyzed the political use of the Internet in the 2002 presidential election. While acknowledging the political role of the Internet, he argued that its role should not be exaggerated. He argued that existing research made the mistake of equating the widespread use of the Internet with the political use of the Internet. In addition, he empirically demonstrated that the influence of the traditional media such as the TV and newspapers was still as strong as that of the Internet. Similarly, Yun Young-min (2003) analyzed the political influence of the Internet in the 2002 presidential election. He observed that the power of political parties and the media decreased while the Internet empowered politically active citizens. However, he remarked that the political orientation of voters had not changed despite the Internet having succeeded in mobilizing supporters. He also observed that political victory could

not be scored through cyber power alone, although it enhanced the effectiveness of cyber electoral campaign.

The existing literature thus reveals the achievements and limits of social movements that exploit the Internet. The previous works, however, are less successful in exposing the nature of the social environment that enabled the development of online social movements. What are the factors that contributed to the rapid growth of the online social movement in Korea? In what type of changed environment did cyberactivism evolve? This paper tries to provide answers to the questions by analyzing the newly-established structure of political opportunities. This paper opts to focus on the structure rather than capabilities of movement groups because capabilities per se, despite their importance, are not sufficient conditions that determine the success of movements. Therefore, it is necessary to simultaneously consider the objective conditions that unleash the potentials of movement groups. In particular, this research analyzes facets of the online social movement in the macro-contexts of democratization and informatization. It is from such a perspective that this study will carry out a comparative analysis of the characteristics of cyberactivism using the cases of Citizens' Alliance for the 2000 General Election (CAGE) and Nosamo (Gathering of People Who Love Roh Moo-hyun). In particular, this study will focus on the contents of political opportunity structure that improves resources mobilization capability of civil society and characteristics, effects, and implications of cyberactivism.

The Structure of Political Opportunities and Social Movement

According to the resource mobilization theory, the success of a social movement largely depends on the size of available resources that trigger political mobilization. The theory argues that changes in the political environment lead to an expansion of the size of available resources and that this is a decisive factor that affects the strategies of social movements and their success or failure. Here, resources

encompass multidimensional collective incentives that can successfully realize collective solidarity and pursuit of goals. Multidimensional collective incentives include a movement's organization, ideology, professional knowledge, leadership, fund, facilities, means of communication, and cooperation with other groups. Klandermans (1984), McAdam (1988), and Kriesi (1995) proposed "the structure of political opportunities" as a conceptual device that describes the social context in which such resources mobilization capability is noticeably enhanced. Here, opportunities depend on variables that are external to the mobilized group and refer to "options of collective action" that involve both chances and risks (Shin 2004, 223). For instance, crises situations such as the division of the established political power and collapse of the economic system contribute to the formation of a friendly environment for social movements. For Kitschelt (1986), constitutive elements of the structure of political opportunities are the openness of polity and the strength of policy implementation capability. Tarrow (1996) cites the polity's openness, the stability of political coalitions, the existence of alliance and supportive groups, and division among the elite as elements of the structure of political opportunities. Piven and Cloward (1997) highlight economic chaos as an important element that promotes division among the elite and activation of a social movement. Grossman (1995), Kahn and Kellner (2004), and Boncheck (1997) point to network and technological tools such as new media as the core elements of the structure of political opportunities for social movements in the age of information.

From the macro perspective, the structure of political opportunities stimulates changes in the power relationship between civil society and the state or political society. Since the second half of the 1980s, the social movements in Korea have experienced "democratization" and "informatization"—macro changes that have caused openness in the structure of political opportunities. In other words, a combination of the two trends has drastically expanded institutional and physical conditions of the social movements. First of all, with the democratic uprising of June 1987, a successful transition to democra-

cy and a rapid increase in the autonomy of civil society were achieved. Since then, various types of social issues were raised and social movements were organized in a large scale. With the advent of post-authoritarian civilian governments in the 1990s, the growth of social movements began unhindered. In 2000, there were 20,000 civil society organizations (CSOs), more than 75% of which were established in the 1990s (NGO Times 2000). Most remarkably, civilian governments enacted laws and carried out policies that supported the growth of social movements. As a result, Korea's state corporatism, a mode of rule upon which Korea's authoritarian governments were based, was weakened and autonomous social movements were able to grow.

Furthermore, informatization has encouraged the raising of provocative issues on the part of the CSOs and the organization of social movements. The speed of Korea's informatization has been remarkably fast and Korea is a world leader in the use of the Internet. In 2005, more than 31 million Koreans from a total population of 47 million had access to broadband Internet connections, more than 12 million Koreans subscribed to very high speed Internet services, and more than 83% of household had personal computers. That Korea is ranked on the top in the areas of the very high speed Internet penetration rate, number of Internet cafes, registration of .com domains, and the amount of online stock transactions shows that the country is a world leader in informatization (Koreanlick 2005). It should be noted that under such rapidly changing environment of informatization, civil society's political use of ICTs has been developing quantitatively and qualitatively. Since the early 1990s, netizens have used online bulletin boards, online clubs, and CUG (Closed User Group) to create PC communications-based political forums. And in the 2000s, the political forums for discussion have grown further thanks to various types of web-based media and cyber communities. CSOs have also actively used ICTs for (1) transmission and promotion of information, (2) public opinion survey and aggregation, (3) internal organization and communication, and (4) mobilization of resources and alliance.

In Korean society, one of the newest methods of social movement, which are based on new political opportunities offered by democratization and informatization, is cyberactivism. Cyberactivism is a form of social movement that uses ICTs and cyberspace to pursue socio-political goals. Cyberactivism, however, is not confined to cyberspace, as it is also a strategy that guides activists from the information superhighway to the streets (Vegh 2003; Trevor 1999). In considering the structure of political opportunities in Korea's cyberactivism, the most important factor is Korea's unique political context: the delayed consolidation of democracy despite a successful transition to democracy in 1987. Cyberactivism should not be understood as a movement that is automatically triggered by the development of ICTs. In other words, cyberactivism of diverse levels and intensity evolve depending upon the social condition and context in which political demands are voiced. The cases presented in research show that cyberactivism in Korea is carried out by the initiatives of movement groups that seek to achieve breakthroughs that can accelerate delayed democratization.

In the age of informatization, cyberspace can be understood as a space that reflects the reality of the offline world and thus displays multifaceted social attributes. In particular, from the perspective of social movements, cyberspace is the locus where movement groups are engaged in contestation for the pursuit of their political goals. However, cyberspace should not be simplistically treated as a factor that determines the performance of social movements. This is because cyberspace plays roles at divergent levels depending upon the agenda, actors, and goals. A comparison of the activities of the Nosamo and CAGE revealed that the role and importance of cyberspace differed in the two organizations. In the case of Nosamo, individuals who supported a specific politician voluntarily organized the online support group to carry out active cyberactivist strategies centered on cyberspace. In contrast, in the case of the CAGE, which is an alliance of civic organizations, the role of cyberspace was supplementary because the movement to prevent the nomination and election of questionable politicians already enjoyed a powerful presence in the

offline space. Cyberspace was the "epicenter" for the Nosamo, whereas it was merely a "stopover" for CAGE.

Who and what, then, are the actors, goals, and effects of cyberactivism? The actors of cyberactivism are netizens, citizens of a network. Netizens are people who create a new network culture by forming social relationships and communities in cyberspace. In the age of informatization, netizens can be distinguished from traditional citizens; netizens can be understood as a politico-cultural group composed of autonomous citizens who express internal dynamism (Chung and Cho 2004). Also designated as a "smart mob," "network army," and "online citizens," netizens who share common interest in specific issues tend to voluntarily organize gatherings online. Unique characteristics of netizens are the active use of ICTs, expression of various types of value systems, and active participation in communities. In particular, the young age group, which is characterized by high political awareness and familiarity with information technology, defines the core group of netizens (Rheingold 2002; Hunter 2002; Chang 2005a; Lee et al. 2005).

Cyberactivism can pursue two broad goals. First, cyberactivism uses cyberspace as a tool to resolve issues from the offline space. Second, cyberactivism is a movement that attempts to solve problems internal to cyberspace within cyberspace (Paik 1999). As for the former goal, civil society tries to achieve its political goals by effectively using cyberspace for agenda setting, formation of public opinion, mobilization of the masses, and collective action. Cyberspace is thus used as a powerful physical tool to achieve the goals of social movements. In pursuing the latter goal, cyberactivism becomes a cyberspace-based movement that strives to secure citizens' interest by overcoming restrictions imposed on the transmission of information. Therefore, major agenda items for the second set of goals include freedom of expression, information access and sharing, and privacy.

Cyberactivism attempts to use the strengths of cyberspace to enhance effectiveness of citizens' political participation. A number of factors contribute to the pursuit of the goal. First, cyberspace offers a convenient path for political participation. Furthermore, one impor-

tant attribute of cyberspace is that it offers the psychological comfort of easily crossing the boundaries that separate communities. Second, the transaction cost of participation is very low. In the online world, participation cost is confined to little more than Internet access fee. In addition, the non-face-to-face and anonymous nature of communication in cyberspace substantially decreases risks that involve participation. Third, cyberactivism offers various types of participation. Online political participation can be carried out at various levels: access to specific information, expression and exchange of opinion, the formation and operation of groups, and collective action. Fourth, cyberactivism facilitates the formation of netizens' collective identity and their sense of political efficiency. Cyberspace encourages organization and political action of people who share identical temperament, concerns, and goals (Schmidtke 1998; Corrado 1996; Chang 2003; Lee W. 2004).

New Macro Environments of Korean Social Movements

Civil society is a public realm in which citizens express and achieve their collective interests based on their autonomy vis-à-vis the state (Cohen and Arato 1992). In civil society, diverse interest groups and social movement organizations are rival actors that pursue their goals. Historically, the development of Korean civil society was impeded by authoritarian states. Korean civil society, which began to emerge in the last phase of Joseon dynasty, was long suppressed by the colonial and military rules. "Overgrowth of the state and underdevelopment of civil society" characterized predemocratic Korean society (Choi 2002, 41-66; Chung C. 2003). The democratic uprising of June 1987 and subsequent transition to democracy initiated the rapid development of Korea's civil society and social movements. During the last twenty years, the wave of democratization in Korea generated a virtuous circle: the breakdown of authoritarian regimes, reintroduction of direct presidential election, the inauguration of civilian government, and the transfer of power by election (Yi 1997;

Park K. 2006; Park S. 2006).

In the 1990s, civilian governments' policies and legislation encouraged the formation of CSOs and the development of social movements. In 1994, for instance, the "Act on Registration of Social Organizations" was replaced by the "Act on Reporting the Formation of Social Organizations." State intervention was repealed by a change to promote autonomous CSOs. The "Act on the Disclosure of Information by Public Agencies," which was enacted in 1998, provided an opportunity for monitoring the public sector by the participation of citizens for the pursuit of transparency in government. With the enactment of the "Nonprofit Private Organization Support Act" in 1999, CSOs secured stable institutional status and began to enjoy various types of tax benefits and freedom of action (Kim and Kim 2004, 88-91). In particular, the government began to establish cooperative partnerships with self-supportive CSOs through financial support in order to integrate the CSOs' inputs into its decision-making processes. After the enactment of the Nonprofit Private Organization Support Act, the government's financial support to quasi-autonomous NGOs, which amounted to about 40% of its support to the CSOs, was reduced to a mere 16%, whereas its support to professional and self-supportive CSO's was drastically increased.

Such changes diversified institutional devices for the activities of CSOs. In particular, the changes supported the CSOs effort to forge tightened alliance around political reform agendas. In a newly-democratized Korea, the political challenge of civil society was sustained because of the following factor. The structure of political and economic vested interests was maintained. Essentially, the survival of the old structure of vested interests was enabled by the nature of democratization in Korea: this was "democratization by pact," which was agreed upon among the moderates in the military and civilian political opponents. In other words, Korea's transition to democracy did not result in the "punctuated equilibrium" that terminates authoritarian rule. Stated another way, the breakdown of military authoritarianism did not mean replacement of the hegemonic group's hold on power.

Second, the challenge of the CSOs was sustained by a delayed political reform that prevented the destruction of the existing structure of vested interests. Since the advent of civilian government, various agendas for political reform were proposed. Vested interests, however, succeeded in resisting efforts for reform. International society also exerted pressure on Korea to introduce more transparency. For instance, the national corruption index released by Transparency International has shown high level of corruption in Korea and such data have urged Korea to accelerate political reform (Kwon 2003, 266). According to a survey on trust jointly carried out by Gallup International and World Economic Forum (Gallup International 2002), the low level of trust for Korean government and legislature is alarming. The results show that there is a crisis of trust regarding government policies and the representative functions of the legislature. On the other hand, a high level of trust toward NGOs shows that they are perceived as powerful political alternatives.

The factors mentioned above legitimized the political participation of civil society. Since democratization, four types of political reform movements carried out by CSOs emerged. The movements were different in terms of the level of intervention and movement type. First, a movement for fair elections and the monitoring of parliamentary politics emerged. The movement is a form of political intervention at the lowest level and consists of monitoring politicians' legislative activities and of pursuing neutral election campaigns.

Second, a movement for the reform of the political system appeared. The movement pursues political reform by revision and abolition of laws, as well as their execution. Since the early 1990s, CSOs have submitted reform bills to the National Assembly targeting the Political Fund Act, Act on the Election of Public Officials and the Prevention of Election Malpractices, National Assembly Act, and Political Parties Act. The CSOs also made proposals for political reform including introduction of the Act to Prevent Political Corruption, Human Rights Act, confirmation hearings, and the special prosecutor system (Lee C. 2004, 64-67).

Third, a movement to replace corrupt politicians was carried out. The movement is an attempt to overcome the limits of the two previous movements mentioned above. The most representative example of the movement was the *nakcheon* campaign to blacklist disqualified nominees and the *nakseon* campaign to defeat those who were nevertheless nominated to run during the 16th general election. The activists of the movement proposed to civil society criteria for selecting National Assemblymen. The movement inaugurated a citizens-centered election by transforming passive voters into informed citizens. In particular, the movement tried a new form of political participation by large-scale civil disobedience and negative electoral campaign.

Fourth, a movement for the direct participation in election and politicization of netizens emerged. In this movement, CSOs themselves selected or supported their favorite candidates. The movement mainly found expression in local elections as well as the realm of gender equality. In the 1998 local election, 50% of candidates supported by CSOs were elected. The movement's activists also argued for the introduction of a proportional representation system and a proportionate nomination of women candidates.

The transition to democracy and increased autonomy of civil society provided the institutional condition for the development of social movements in Korea. In contrast, informatization and rapid increase in the use of information can be understood as the physical conditions that can strengthen institutional conditions. The success of informatization and increased use of information can be attributed to the following factors (Chang 2005b, 928-929). First, a geographic factor contributed to the success. Korea's residential arrangement is unique. About one-fourth of Koreans live in Seoul. Most of them live in apartments or densely populated areas. Therefore, thanks to the urban residential concentration, broadband networks were able to be built in a cost-effective manner.

Second, the government has strongly supported the information technology sector. To maximize the investment effect in the information industry sector and to expand the ICTs market, the Korean gov-

ernment began to build very high-speed networks, far in advance of other countries. The financial crisis that hit Korea in the tenth year after the transition to democracy urged the Kim Dae-jung government to focus on nurturing venture companies and the IT industry. As a result, the infrastructure for information communication was firmly and rapidly established in Korea. And as early as 1997, Korea completed an optical cable network linking 80 cities nationwide. Furthermore in 2005, an all-directional infrastructure for social communications was built by the completion of a very high-speed national network and public network project.

Third, low Internet access and usage fees contributed to the growth of cyberactivism in Korea. Koreans can enjoy unlimited access to the Internet from their homes at a rate of only US\$25 per month. In the case of Internet cafes, hourly usage charges are US\$7 in the United Kingdom, US\$5 in the United States, and US\$4.30 in Canada. In Korea, however, the charge is only US\$1.4 (Koreanclick 2005). Furthermore, free Internet access and usage are available in schools and public organizations.

Since the mid-1990s, Korean netizens have expanded alternative online forums for discussions by using various types of media. They share a common political and social ethos in that they have experienced the process of democratization, do not trust mainstream media, and are familiar with the Internet. The advent of the new media supported by technological development provides them with more opportunities for alternative public discussion activities. Furthermore, they form a majority of Internet users and the amount of time they spend in cyberspace exceeds those spent on other media activities. In the meanwhile, bottom-up agenda-setting and interactive formation of public opinion regarding important agenda increased the likelihood of transforming such activities into social movements. For example, the development of alternative online forums for discussions developed in three phases (Chang 2005c, 398-404).

First, public discussions began to use PC communications in the early 1990s. Netizens began to take advantage of Bulletin Board Sys-

tems (BBSs) in PC networks to generate and disseminate discussions. Their arguments differed from those provided by the existing media. In particular, many arguments targeting political conservatism and cultural Confucianism were put forward. Furthermore, the netizens organized online clubs and CUGs (Closed User Groups), which were characterized by a spirit of resistance toward the existing order.

Second, prototypes of alternative media appeared on the Internet by taking advantage of various types of mediums. The mode of expressions representing the period can be conceptualized by the words "parody" and "anti." This was marked by the publishing of the *Ddanji Ilbo* (www.ddanji.com), an Internet newspaper that was a parody version of the *Chosun Ilbo*, Korea's largest and most influential conservative newspaper. Moreover, reformist intellectuals organized the Anti-Chosun Urimodu (www.urimodu.com) to carry out a systematic movement to close down the *Chosun Ilbo*. One important characteristic of this period was that netizens began to use professional online media to launch a movement for alternative media.

Third, media that pursue alternative journalism and political reform have appeared recently. Parody and "anti-sites" succeeded as criticism-oriented media. They, however, did not develop into alternative media. The most representative examples of online media that succeeded in overcoming the traditional structure are *Ohmynews* (www.ohmynews.com) and column sites. Based on participatory and interactive communications, they have strongly challenged the existing media. In particular, such alternative media contributed to the victory of presidential candidate Roh Moo-hyun in the 2002 election and have greatly expanded their political influence since then.

The Organization and Online Political Mobilization of the CAGE

The formation of the CAGE (Citizens' Alliance for the 2000 General Election) and the launch of the *nakcheon* and *nakseon* movements

mentioned above can be analyzed from anecdotal and fundamental perspectives. After the inauguration of the Kim Dae-jung government, CSOs focused on the introduction of a special prosecutor system and the enactment of an anti-corruption act. As the enactment was delayed, 40 organizations organized Citizens' Alliance for Monitoring of State Administration Inspection in September 1999 to monitor state administration inspection-related activities of the National Assembly and political parties and to coerce enactment of reformist laws (Kim J. 2000, 336-337). The alliance placed its participating organizations in charge of permanent committees to make demands on issues related to state administration inspection. The alliance's monitoring activities could not be carried out because its attendance in permanent committees was denied. The organization pursued a struggle led by the CAGE to ensure adoption of its opinions, which were based on its evaluation of legislation activities of the 15th National Assembly, in the nomination of candidates for the 16th general election (Chung D. 155-166).

From a more fundamental perspective, the activities of the CAGE stemmed from a crisis of representative democracy in Korea. Since the transition to democracy, Korean democracy in the 1990s has been characterized by a "prolonged consolidation" (Choi 2002, 17-38), which was caused by the maintenance of authoritarian political behavior and the repeated advent of divided government. In other words, political parties in the postdemocratization era, which were rooted in the authoritarian era, were different only in name and outward appearance. They have dominated politics without producing any palpable changes in policies, organization, and leadership style (Jaung 2003, 32). Furthermore, political culture and practices were largely unchanged. In such a context, divided government harmed the stability and effectiveness of rule.

Second, in particular, the process of selecting candidates in electoral politics has been alienated from civil society and a few powerful politicians have exercised too much decision-making power in the nomination process. For instance, the head of a party played an essential role in selecting the power elite and national district system

or proportional representation system have strengthened the head's power. Because each party represents a specific region in Korean politics, nomination by the head of a party largely determines the candidates' election.

From such a perspective, CSOs organized the CAGE in January 2000 and initiated the *nakcheon* and *nakseon* campaigns. The CAGE was the largest political alliance in Korean history, with 1,054 participating organizations, thereby surpassing the scale of the National Movement Headquarters during the June Uprising of 1987. The *nakcheon* and *nakseon* campaigns were non-partisan movements that pursued social public good and were examples of bottom-up political mobilization. To carry out the campaign, the organization of the CAGE was characterized by a horizontal network based on a weak alliance, unlike other CSOs. The movement was supported by online communications with CSOs throughout the nation being effectively represented as a force to strengthen alliances and the overall influence of the movement. Furthermore, the movement encouraged the voluntary political participation of citizens, including communications and information sharing among citizens and netizens.

The activities of CAGE were carried out step-by-step from the non-nomination campaign and elimination of regional sentiment campaign to movement to abolish the Act on the Election of Public Officials and the Prevention of Election Malpractices, and defeat in the election movement (CAGE 2001). On January 24, 2000, the CAGE proposed the following criteria in selecting candidates to be defeated: corruption, violation of the Act on the Election of Public Officials and the Prevention of Election Malpractices, destruction of the constitutional order, attempt to arouse regional sentiment, and anti-human right history. In addition, the organization announced a list of 112 ineligible candidates. Because of a lack of cooperation on the part of political parties, a considerable number of blacklisted candidates were nominated and CAGE began a campaign to annul the nomination. In addition to sending formal requests to political parties, the organization filed a lawsuit requesting canceling of nomination. More importantly, the organization succeeded in frustrating the nomination

of 58 blacklisted politicians by arousing public opinion through online and offline networking.

When the elections began, the CAGE announced the list of nominees to be defeated and began a strong campaign to realize its goal of defeating blacklisted candidates. Creative events that it organized to lead the national election movement included the "CAGE Bus Tour," "Citizens' Plaza for Political Reform," "All People's Gathering," "Movement for Candidates' Pledging for Political Reform," and "Movement for Voters' Promise." The organization selected 22 strategic targets and carried out a person-to-person campaign to have them defeated in the general election. As a result, 59 of 86 blacklisted candidates, or 68.6% of the targets, were defeated. In addition, 15 of 22 strategic targets, 68.2%, were defeated (CAGE 2001, 275). Except for Gyeongsang and Jeolla provinces, the centers of extreme regionalistic voting, the organization's success rate was almost 100%.

The most important characteristic of CAGE activities was that online and offline networking was used to maximize political effect. The organization's online activities were led by the Cyber CAGE. The organization used a website to provide various types of information to induce the formation of public opinion and political mobilization: candidates' profile, citizens' opinion, campaign data, and election fundraising. Internally, 1,000 affiliated organizations were efficiently organized and interorganizational communications and alliances were strengthened. The achievements of the organization's cyber activities can be summarized below.

First, the organization preemptively occupied the election agenda and led a citizen-centered election. In past Korean elections, civil society had passively reacted to the agenda selected by political parties and the media. In this respect, it was remarkable that the CAGE was able to succeed in setting the *nakcheon* and *nakseon* campaigns and that it could spread public opinion by the use of online means. The organization's release of criteria for blacklisting politicians encouraged the formation of an informed citizenry. During the election period, a daily average of 150 to 240 thousand accesses was recorded (CAGE 2001, 296).

Second, the movement encouraged the voluntary formation of voters' opinion and their political participation. The CAGE used its website for providing information and news on the general election, hosting political discussions in its bulletin board, carrying out online voting and petition-signing campaigns, making requests to political parties, recruiting supporters, and raising funds. In particular, the organization provided a search service involving candidates' military service, crime record, tax payment history, and legislation activities to mobilize otherwise cynical young voters. In addition, it proposed 10 guidelines for netizens' participation in the election and launched a "Campaign for Netizens' Pledge to Participate in the Election." Targeting political parties, the organization carried out a "Campaign for Sending Cyber Yellow Cards" and organized cyber election monitoring groups to monitor illegal election campaigns.

The success of the activities of the CAGE is shown in the following quantifiable indexes: For 90 days, there were 925,000 accesses to the site. About 5,000 people participated in an opinion survey and 98% of them supported the *nakcheon* and *nakseon* movements. In a petition-signing campaign, there were about 300,000 participating netizens. In bulletin boards for discussions, a daily average of 306 posting and a total of 45,674 postings was recorded. As for candidates' irregularities, 250 reports were submitted. Citizens' fundraising effort yielded a fund that amounted to 0.27 billion won (CAGE 2001, 296).

Third, both the organization and alliance of participating organizations were effectively carried out. The CAGE established websites by regions and sectors and launched autonomous activities. In addition, by establishing a link, 25 sectoral and regional groups dispersed throughout the nation were joined together for collective action. Alliance activities through the link can be understood as strategic activities to expand and develop issues raised by the CAGE through its regional bases. Furthermore, e-mails and cyber newsletters facilitated a more permanent set of communications among activists.

Fourth, various types of online electoral campaigns were mounted in civil society. The activities of the CAGE had a spillover effect:

various types of CSOs to establish websites for participation in election. For instance, 15 Internet media organized an Information and Communications Alliance for General Election to consolidate netizens' commitment for political reform and to disseminate the argument supporting the legitimacy of the *nakcheon* and *nakseon* movements. In particular, the level of online participation of young voters' organizations such as the Alliance of Young Voters and College Students' Movement for 2000 General Election was pronounced. To encourage greater electoral participation of young voters, a cyber community named M-tizen Public Action was established. M-tizen is a word coined by combining the word "mobile" with "netizen." Therefore, M-tizen refers to activist netizens. Campaign activities initiated by M-tizen Public Action include the "Campaign for Sending e-Mails of Hope to Pledge Netizens' Participation in Election" and the "Banner Posting Campaign to Pledge Netizens' Participation in Election." Netizens and the public positively received the campaigns. The organization also conducted online public opinion surveys, discussions, and petition-signing campaigns regarding the legitimacy of the *nakcheon* and *nakseon* movements and the necessity of abolishing the Act on the Election of Public Officials and the Prevention of Election Malpractices.

However, the campaign to prevent the nomination and election of questionable candidates was essentially an offline-centered movement. The campaign was widely known among the public through the activities of the media and CSOs. Later, the movement spread to cyberspace. The campaign's goal, as an agenda item, had explosive potential and the CAGE used diverse methods to win the support of citizens. The powerful and impressive means used by the organization included "citizens' discussion forum for political reform," "voters' pledge campaign," "candidates' vow for political reform," "bus tour," "bicycle demonstration," and "person-to-person campaign to prevent election of questionable politicians." Cyberspace provided with a complementary means of sustaining the momentum of the movement. This, however, does not belittle the significance of cyberspace. It is, after all, in cyberspace that the CAGE emerged as

Cyber CAGE, the largest association of organizations. The use of cyberspace by CSOs to mobilize citizens and to carry out active cyberactivism was an important event in the history of social movement in Korea.

The Organization and Online Political Mobilization of the Nosamo

The birth of Nosamo was triggered by a combination of two factors: the task of overcoming regionalism and implementing political reform and the personage of Roh Moo-hyun. For Nosamo activists, Roh Moo-hyun embodied symbolic meanings as a "victim of regionalism" and a "resistance fighter struggling against invested groups who enjoy Cold War anti-communism." What Nosamo supported was the necessity of political reform symbolized by Roh Moo-hyun rather than Roh Moo-hyun as a person. Therefore, Nosamo was much more than a mere support group that favored a particular politician (Hong Seong-tae 2002). When Roh Moo-hyun, a candidate from the Millennium Democratic Party, was defeated in the general election of 1999 because of regionalism-based voting, his online supporters organized a fan club named Nosamo. The significance of the Nosamo lies in that it was the first online fan club that supported a politician. The Nosamo was spontaneously organized by netizens. In the bulletin board of Roh Moo-hyun's website, netizens who used "Old Fox" as ID uploaded a posting that proposed the formation of an organization to support Roh Moo-hyun. Netizens that supported the idea opened the "Temporary Bulletin Board of the Roh Moo-hyun Fan Club" and began to recruit members. Later, the organization emerged as a nationwide organization as members organized regional chapters in Seoul, Gwangju, and Busan. At the time of its founding in May 2000, there were about 500 members. Within a year, the number increased to more than 4,000. As the club's activities spilled to the offline world, the number reached the 50,000 mark in August 2002, more than 100,000 in December 2002, the month of the presidential election.

About 77% of Nosamo members are in their twenties and thirties. The members are postauthoritarian and lead the use of ICTs. In these respects, they are temperamentally opposed to the older generation. Therefore, Nosamo is intriguing not only because of its rapid quantitative growth but also because it is a gathering of a younger generation that shares common political beliefs. Interestingly, Nosamo members chose support to specific leadership rather than traditional type of social movement as a way of expressing their collective aspiration. For the members, Roh Moo-hyun, the politician, was a proxy through whom they would be able to fulfill the long-awaited tasks of eliminating regionalism and implementing political reform.

From its birth to its participation in the presidential election, the expansion of Nosamo underwent two phases (Kim Y. 2004; Chang 2005a). The first phase ended in December 2001, when Nosamo decided to participate in the preliminary election inside the Millennium Democratic Party for the selection of the party's presidential candidate. In this period, Nosamo, originally a fan club, transformed itself into a political association. The Millennium Democratic Party, the ruling party that faced a national discontent and mistrust, introduced a system of preliminary election in which all people could participate.¹ By participating in the preliminary, Nosamo could grow and expand the scope of its activities as it took advantage of its online potentials. According to various public opinion surveys, Rhee In-je, was the most likely future presidential candidate of the Millennium Democratic Party. Rhee was ahead of Roh Moo-hyun by more than

1. The Millennium Democratic Party tried a new system to elect its presidential candidate. The party's preliminary was open to the public. Party members and citizens elected candidates for public offices. The party organized an electoral body totaling 70,000 people and composed of representatives (20%), party members (30%), and citizens (50%). The preliminary, which was carried out as a tour, lasted for two months from March 2001. Interestingly, 2.5% of the electors (1,750 people) were selected by online voting. This method of selection was used to secure support of young voters, who are leading users of the Internet. As a result, the introduction of the preliminary was a decisive factor that led to the election of Roh Moo-hyun.

10% in the approval rate. Nosamo, however, strategically used the Internet to mobilize 400,000 voters, which amounts to 2% of 1.9 million participants to the electoral committee of the preliminary. Nosamo used the Internet and mobile means of communication to send voice and text messages to the participants and Nosamo members. This prompt supply of information by Nosamo contributed to the formation of a pro-Roh Moo-hyun mood. For two months, Nosamo made an election campaign tour of 16 cities nationwide. The initial gap between Roh and Rhee evaporated and Roh Moo-hyun was elected as the presidential candidate.

The second phase begins in May 2002, when Nosamo finalized a plan for its development and ends in the victory of Roh in the presidential election. During the period, Nosamo functioned as the electoral machine of candidate Roh. Nosamo was sharply divided before it finally decided to participate in the Millennium Democratic Party's preliminary election. Roh's election as the candidate, however, encouraged Nosamo members to be more proactive as they became aware of their political potential. As the Millennium Democratic Party lost regional and special elections held in 2002 and Roh remained far behind Lee Hoi-chang, the candidate of the Grand National Party, Nosamo organized a special committee for presidential election and strengthened its activities. Since then, Nosamo successfully cope with challenges to Roh: a challenge from the opponents within the Millennium Democratic Party who argued for a replacement of the presidential candidate, negotiations with candidate Chung Mong-jun for the selection of a unified candidate, and Chung Mong-jun's revoking of his support to Roh. Nosamo successfully cope with crisis situations and made decisive contribution for the victory of Roh Moo-hyun.

The online activities of CAGE were based on its strengths in the offline world. In contrast, the offline activities of Nosamo were based on the organization's foundation in the online world. Voluntary participation centered on the Nosamo website (www.nosamo.org), democratic and interactive decision-making, and strategic political mobilization were the main online activities of Nosamo. The website of Nosamo not only fulfilled these roles but also played the role of

ensuring internal cohesion and external mobilization in times of crisis. The achievements of Nosamo's cyberactivism can be summarized below.

First, bulletin boards in the website were used to foster interactive communication. Nosamo's online activities consisted of bottom-up agenda-setting and discussions on the one hand and the formation and propagation of pro-Roh arguments on the other. During the election period, Nosamo's bulletin boards were filled with discussions that attempted to strengthen the cohesiveness of members. In addition, various election-related issues were continuously discussed. In particular, Nosamo's agenda-setting method was such that issues that dominated past elections—the Cold War and regionalism—did not prevail over other issues discussed by Nosamo members (Park D. 2003). Major decisions such as those involving participation to the Millennium Democratic Party's preliminary or to presidential election campaign were made through fierce online discussions. Most of the posted writings dealt with the reasons why candidate Roh should be supported and strategies to expand his support base. Strategies that were discussed in bulletin boards were applied to online and offline activities by netizens (Yun S. 2003, 79). In December, when the whole society became mired in electoral competition, the daily average of accesses to Nosamo reached 300,000. Posted writings numbered 10,000 and were read by 2 million people (Millennium Democratic Party 2003).

Second, the Internet was used to deal strategically with major scheduled political events. Nosamo activities in the Millennium Democratic Party's preliminary began the creation of a committee for participation in the preliminary election. As the party decided to introduce the preliminary, Nosamo's Central Permanent Committee decided to form a preparedness committee, which was also organized in regions. This committee organized lectures and discussion sessions for Nosamo members nationwide in an effort to explain the meaning of participating in the preliminary and Nosamo's role in it. As Nosamo began to promote Roh Moo-hyun, the members carried out a voluntary campaign to transmit pro-Roh arguments throughout the

Internet from one online site to the other. All Nosamo members were mobilized and the Nosamo campaigns massively carried out included the "Campaign for One Person to Get 100 Applications for Participating in the Preliminary" and the "Campaign to Write Letters to the Electors of the Preliminary" (Kim Jin-hyang 2002). Nosamo's well-organized participation for single presidential candidate selection was also very successful and impressive. Nosamo's website flooded with pro-Roh arguments, guidelines for participating in telephone survey, etc. Nosamo members rapidly disseminated postings throughout cyberspace. Thanks to such activities, the membership of Nosamo surpassed 73,000 at the time of negotiations for single candidacy. During the election campaign period, Nosamo website had a daily average of one million visitors.

Third, Nosamo functioned as an electoral machine for candidate Roh. As a quasi-party machine, Nosamo was engaged in fundraising activities. Nosamo even opened an Internet TV station in candidate Roh's official website to air Roh's campaign, policies, and political commercials. In the field of Internet TV broadcasting, the station was ranked first, outshining commercial sites. In the case of Internet radio, young voters and popular entertainers were in charge of live broadcasting for more than ten hours a day. The station functioned as a headquarters for transmitting election campaign guidelines to the supporters. Furthermore, wireless Internet service was introduced to send voice and text messages about major political schedule and events to affect public opinion. And Nosamo's "small sum fundraising method" was a shock to existing politicians. Through various types of fundraising methods, such as credit cards, mobile phone, ARS, online transfer, and "piggy banks of hope," a total of 7.2 billion won was raised from more than 200,000 people. In the case of online fundraising, funding stores soared, from a daily 100-200 to 2,000-9,000 when National Assemblyman Kim Min-seok left the Millennium Democratic Party (Whang 2004, 126). In the case of the piggy bank of hope distributed to the citizens, a total of 22,042 banks were returned and the total fund raised through this method amounted to about 760 million won. The current status of the fund raised and its

use was reported on the website.

Fourth, the Nosamo movement showed the effectiveness of political campaigns using the Internet and mobile devices. Even when the election was completed at midnight, Nosamo website was flooded by visitors and the use of telephones at the time segment increased by more than 30% (Chang 2003, 57-61; *Dong-a Ilbo*, December 20, 2003). Visits to the Nosamo website peaked on the Election Day with 860,000 visitors, 300,000 postings, and 5.6 million clicks to read the postings. It has been argued that mobile device-based mobilization supporting Roh changed the outcome of the election (Kim S. 2005, 357). According to one argument, Lee Hoi-chang was ahead of Roh until 2 to 3 p.m. at the exit polls. It was the mobile election participation campaign that reversed the result. The example illustrates the power of the young age group and a “smart mob” armed with the tools of wireless communications.

Conclusion: Implications of Cyberactivism in Korea

The Korean CSOs’ cyberactivism based on online activities and carried out amid a political condition of delayed democratic consolidation left strong impressions. Foreign media including the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and *Asahi* reported the CAGE to be the biggest winner in the 16th general election. The *nakcheon* and *nakseon* movements and release of information on candidates’ profiles were considered as the major factors that shook Korean politics. As for the result of the presidential election in 2002, the *Guardian* reported that the world’s first Internet president had been elected and that the flower of online democracy bloomed in Korea, a leading Internet power. The cyberactivism of the CAGE and Nosamo can be compared and evaluated in the following four respects.

First, both movements were mounted in a new structure of political opportunities shaped by democratization and informatization. Since the transition to democracy, Korean society has faced a new task: political reform. And the agenda for political reform was estab-

lished amid unique and dynamic social movement: cyberactivism. A remarkable change was the transformation of civil society, where the community of passive voters has led the elections of the 2000s with initiatives. As a result of the two elections, a political process centered on the supplier—the state and political society—was transformed into a “user (civil society)-centered” process. Or, a system based on interactions between the supplier and the user may be emerging.

Second, both movements have revealed some unique characteristics of cyberactivism. The public nature of CSOs is expressed by checking state power, providing public service, and pursuing the public interest. In tune with such characteristics of CSOs, the activities of the CAGE were carried out as a non-partisan political mobilization. And the organization’s movement was mounted at an intermediate level of intervention. In particular, the *nakcheon* and *nakseon* movements allowed the CAGE to surpass the limits allowed by the institution as the movement was transformed into a “civil disobedience movement.” In contrast, Nosamo was an association that espoused the political beliefs of a specific politician. In other words, Nosamo was a partisan political mobilization as it identified with a specific leader to pursue a public goal: political reform. Therefore, Nosamo’s movement was characterized by an intermediate level of intervention—support of Roh—combined with a maximum level of intervention to transform itself into a political power.

Third, both movements showed various types of possibilities in organization and strategies of political mobilization. Both the CAGE and Nosamo were organized as horizontal networks based on regional and sectoral autonomy. And both movements were characterized by inside-out and bottom-up political mobilization through online and offline networking. And both movements evolved by making frequent conflicts with the existing system—Act on the Election of Public Officials and the Prevention of Election Malpractices. In other words, the *nakcheon* and *nakseon* campaigns, electoral participation of private organizations (fan clubs of politicians), and introduction of new fundraising methods were subject to regulation by existing polit-

ical institutions. At the same time, however, the innovations revealed the existing institutions to be outmoded.

On the other hand, the two movements were different in the following respects. CAGE was a temporary alliance of existing organizations. Therefore, the movement agenda originated from the offline context and spread online. And political mobilization was maximized by active negative campaigns. In contrast, the Nosamo movement was led by netizens who were not closely linked with existing organizations. The movement's agenda and organization were rooted in the online context that spilled over to the offline world, with political mobilization being maximized by an active support to specific leadership.

Finally, the success of both movements brightens future prospects regarding political effectiveness and the responsiveness of social movements. The outcomes of the two movements were remarkable. About 52% of candidates targeted by the *nakcheon* movement failed to gain nomination and 68% of candidates targeted by the *nakseon* movement were defeated. And the movement evolved in the 17th general election as a movement to support citizens' candidates. In future general elections, it is possible that civil society may emerge as an independent political force. Nosamo also succeeded in getting Roh Moo-hyun elected as the president and has continued to exercise political power. Nosamo's success has also inspired the proliferation of fan clubs and the booming of politico-cultural fandom. Both movements have influenced institutionalization of citizens-centered politics. Thanks to the success of CAGE, a system requiring the release of candidates' profile was established. Furthermore, preliminary is established as a system for selecting candidates for public offices. It is expected that such institutional changes will promote citizens' interests and making demands on the political process.

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