Korea's Candlelight Protests in Context:
Evidence from the Asian Barometer Survey and Global Events Data*

José Alemán | Fordham University

2016-2017 witnessed the Candlelight Revolution, a series of protests in which 16 million South Koreans peacefully and successfully demanded the end of Park Geun-hye's presidency. This paper probes what this event says about the strength of South Korea's democracy. Scholars have argued that popular mobilization is positively associated with commitment to and support for democracy in East Asia. Using survey and events data, I study the factors driving protest participation in Korea and compare the Candlelight Revolution to previous protest cycles there. I also compare protest

https://doi.org/10.21051/PS.2019.04.27.1.313

* Acknowledgements: I would like to thank the Global Agenda Center (GAC), the Global Peace and Innovation Forum (GPIF), the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of Sports and Tourism of the Republic of Korea, for inviting me to the special international conference "Emergence of Candlelight Democracy and New Governance Paradigm" (Seoul, October 23-24, 2017). I would also like to thank Kanchan Thaokar for help with data visualization, and three anonymous reviewers as well as the journal's editor-in-chief for thorough and constructive feedback on an earlier version of this paper. Some of the data analyzed in this article were collected by the Asian Barometer Project (2005-2008, 2010-2012, 2013-2016), which was co-directed by Professors Fu Hu and Yun-han Chu and received major funding support from Taiwan's Ministry of Education, Academia Sinica and National Taiwan University. The Asian Barometer Project Office (www.asianbarometer.org) is solely responsible for the data distribution. The author appreciates the assistance in providing data by the institutes and individuals aforementioned. The views expressed herein are the author's own.

and repression in South Korea to domestic conflict in other Third Wave democracies. My research yields two important findings: political protest has become both more routine and less violent in South Korea, and genuine concerns about the quality of democracy rather than dissatisfaction with the political system have driven citizens to partake in protests in recent years. These findings imply that the Candlelight Revolution, the most recent manifestation of popular contention in Korea, reflects and is concerned with the quality of the country's democracy.

Keyword: Candlelight revolution, Domestic political conflict, Quality of democracy

Ⅰ. Introduction

2017 marked the thirtieth anniversary of South Korea's democratic transition. In the three decades since, Korea has experienced an extraordinary degree of popular mobilization (Katsiaficas 2012). Alongside this mobilization, civil society has expanded greatly (Lee 2012). The first candlelight protests – citizens mobilized by information technology holding candles in peaceful assemblies – took place in 2008. 2016-2017 witnessed the Candlelight Revolution (촛불혁명), a series of protests in which 16 million citizens brought about the end of Park Geun-hye's presidency.[1] In this research note, I ask if events like the Candlelight Revolution bode well for Korea's democracy. In so doing, I compare the Revolution to previous episodes of mobilization and study the factors that prompt citizens to engage in protest activity.

The evidence I uncover leads me to be optimistic about the future of Korea's democracy. I find that since the early 1990s, anti-government protests have decreased in intensity while simultaneously involving those who use the internet (including social media) to express political opinions. Considering the

---

1) These are not official numbers, but estimates provided by media outlets and social movement organizations. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016%E2%80%9318_South_Korean_protests. According to some, the Candlelight Revolution "is on par with some of the most substantial examples of civil disobedience recorded in recent history" (Chang 2018, 6).

hyper-connected nature of Korean society[2], this implies that information technology is making Koreans more politically active (Lee 2018). Regarding the motives of protesters, the survey data reveals that those more likely to engage in anti-government protests are not simply the politically or personally disaffected (Dalton et al. 2010, 56), but individuals who care about the quality of their country's democracy. Taken together, these findings imply that the Candlelight Revolution, the most recent manifestation of popular contention in Korea, reflects and is concerned with the quality of the country's democracy.

I begin with some background on the history of state-society relations in Korea and the protest cycles that have rocked the country. I then use events data to study protest and repression over time as well as to compare Korea with other Third Wave democracies. In section three, I ask what factors prompt South Koreans to take part in or to abstain from participating in rallies and demonstrations - and whether those factors have experienced any changes over time. The last section concludes with some reflections on what these findings mean for the quality of South Korean democracy.

---

2) According to the United Nations, South Korea held the top spot in the world in 2010, 2012, 2015, and 2016 in the UN's Information and Communication Technologies Development Index (IDI). For a list of the top countries and IDI scores for the last several years, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ICT_Development_Index.

Ⅱ. Protest and Repression in Korea, 1979–2017

For students of democratization, civil society, and contentious politics, the Republic of Korea stands out for the extraordinary role popular mobilization has played in the country's process of democratization and democratic consolidation (Katsiaficas 2012).[3)] A contentious civil society challenging a strong and highly coercive state is a theme in Korean history closely tracking the upheavals in political regimes the country has experienced since the 1960 April Revolution (Chang 2018). Civil society in South Korea has grown extraordinarily as a result of the country's industrialization and rapid economic development. But due to the dialectical relationship between the state and society in modern times, state–society relations have often seemed conflictual (Chang 2018). Consequently, few Third Wave democracies have experienced the degree of popular mobilization that brought about direct presidential elections in 1987 and the protest cycles that rocked the country thereafter.[4)]

---

3) As Sun–Chul Kim (2016, 1) aptly put it in the opening sentence of his book, "South Korea thrives on protest."

4) A study of 161 countries in Europe, North Africa/the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Americas found that no country registered more protests than South Korea from 1990 to 2014 (321) (Klein and Regan 2018, 497). Even so, this study understates the number of protest events in the country because it records independent events with at least fifty protestors rather than campaigns like the Candlelight Revolution. As a result, the Mass Mobilization Protest Data on which the study is based only records 3 protests in South Korea in 2016 and 2 in 2017. An approach relying more on coding

A question that students of democratization and democratic consolidation raise then is to what extent political protest delays or endangers the consolidation of a nascent democracy. Protests that are too numerous may be symptomatic of a regime that does not enjoy widespread legitimacy and support. They can also indicate that routine channels for making demands and obtaining recourse from government officials are not functioning properly. Violent protests are especially problematic since they can signal a breakdown of political norms.[5] Whether and to what extent protest poses a threat to South Korea's democracy can in part be ascertained using data on protest events.

A question that arises in gathering such data is what source one should use. Human coding of news sources is thought to increase the validity and reliability of the data collected. Time and resource constraints though limit researchers' ability to compile standardized datasets covering extended periods of time. The Global Database of Events, Language and Tone (GDELT),

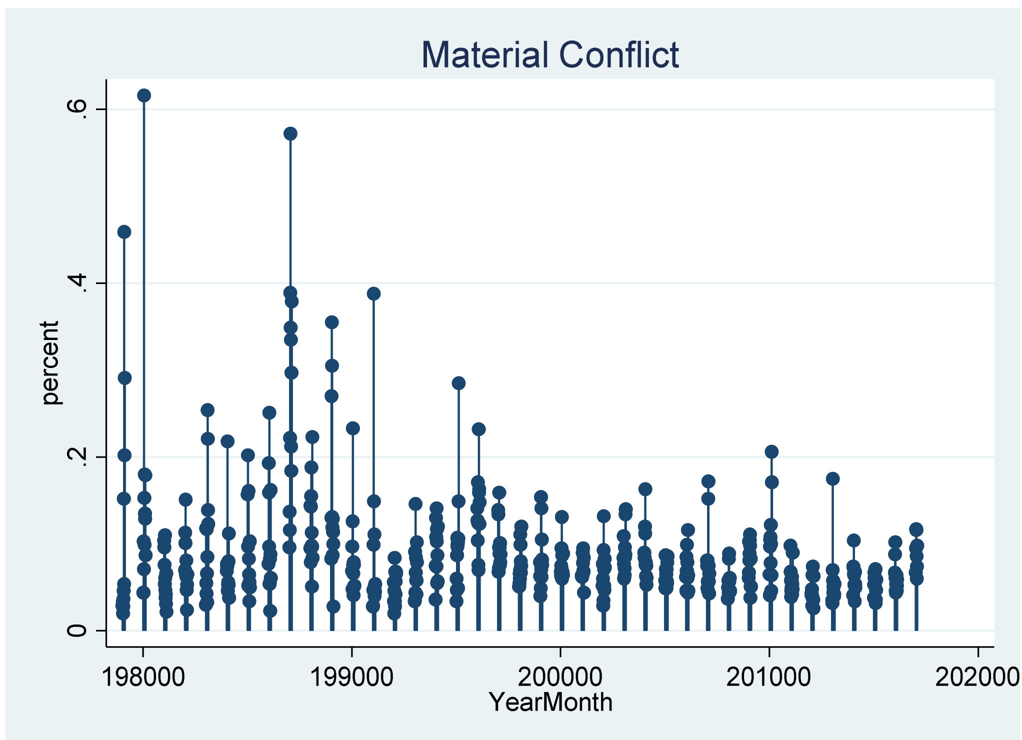
---

the discrete events that made up this protest cycle (rallies were held almost weekly in major cities throughout the country) would have generated a far higher count of events for South Korea. See the Mass Mobilization Data Project at https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/HTTWYL.

5) As one abstute observer of Korean politics has noted, the literature on the relationship between protest and democracy expects social movements to find their "place in routine political life by accodomodating the rules, procedures, and norms of mainstream politics" (Kim 2016, 3-4). "[T]he key idea [is] centered on processes, such as demobilization, moderation, cooptation, professionalization, or bureaucratization, that induce a social movement to give up its radical edge".

the first of its kind, allows me to compile protest event data for South Korea in a valid and reliable way. GDELT "monitors the world's broadcast, print, and web news…in over 100 languages and identifies the people, locations, organizations… and events driving our global society".[6)]

Figure 1. Intensity of domestic political conflict, 1979-2017



Source: GDELT in Google BigQuery website at https://cloudplatform.googleblog.com/2014/05/worlds-largest-event-dataset-now-publicly-available-in-google-bigquery.html (accessed August 20, 2017).

---

6) Korean is one of 65 languages supported by GDELT both in native script form and many common transliterations. "While not all Korean material features word spacing, all Korean news presently monitored by GDELT does use modern conventions of word spacing and horizontal alignment." See https://blog.gdeltproject.org/gdelt-translingual-translating-the-planet/ for more information.

The database uses the Conflict and Mediation Event Observations (CAMEO) framework to classify political events. This makes it possible to provide a sense of how intense protest and repression have been in Korea since April 1979 and to assess their frequency. The graph in Figure 1 provides one such summary.

In the figure, every dot represents the monthly number of material conflict events in South Korea as a percentage of the aggregate volume of global news articles reporting on those events.[7] Material conflict involves events in the categories of "assault", "coerce", "exhibit force posture", "fight", "reduce relations", and "use unconventional mass violence". "The event codes under the CAMEO categories of *Assault* (18), *Fight* (19), and *Use Unconventional Mass Violence* (20) cover most forms of violent dissent and repression, [while] *Coerce* (17) includes codes that pertain directly to nonviolent forms of repression." (Schrodt and Yilmaz 2016, 11). Exhibit force posture refers to displays of police or military power, their mobilization, or increase in their alertness.[8] In the context of intra-state conflict, reduce relations refers mainly to halting negotiations.

---

7) 'For example, the 2011 Egyptian Tahir Square protest would count as only a single "event", which would make Egypt appear relatively stable from a raw event count standpoint, but by measuring the volume of news coverage of that protest event, its global significance is immediately clear'.
http://data.gdeltproject.org/dailytrendreport/Global-Material-Conflict-Annual-Trend-Report-2013-Year-in-Review.pdf.

8) See the CAMEO codebook, p. 7, available at
http://eventdata.parusanalytics.com/cameo.dir/CAMEO.09b6.pdf.

According to Figure 1, material conflict was highest in May 1980, May–June 1987, and October 1979. Those dates are not coincidental, as May 1980 marks the declaration of nationwide martial law by Chun Doo Hwan's military cabinet, the resulting uprising in the southern city of Kwangju, and the military's assault and retaking of that city. June 1987 is the month in which Koreans staged the democratic uprising that toppled the Fifth Republic proclaimed just 6 years prior (6월 민주항쟁). Finally, October 1979 witnessed protests in Pusan and Masan, the assassination of President Park Chung Hee, and a declaration of martial law following his death.

By contrast, spikes for the months of November 2016 to March 2017 (the Candlelight Revolution) barely register in the graph, reflecting the largely peaceful nature of this event that drew thousands of citizens weekly to the streets of the country's major cities. The fifth tallest spike in the graph corresponds to May 1991, a month punctuated by intense student protests following the beating to death of a student activist the prior month and 13 self–immolations (Katsiaficas 2012, 348). Overall, however, the trend of intense overt conflict between civil society and the state evident during Noh Tae Woo's administration (1988–1993) is less visible thereafter.

It might be useful to compare South Korea with other new democracies to ascertain how much material conflict one can expect following the initial transitional period. It is important, however, to be careful in the choice of a reference group, as

the countries need to be similar to Korea in terms of "domestic conditions associated with social and economic development" and causal mechanisms of democratization (Gunitsky 2018, 639). To this end, I examine nine other countries that form the Third Wave of democratization (1974-1988): Greece, Portugal, Spain, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the Philippines, Pakistan, and Taiwan. Of these, Pakistan and the Philippines featured similarly high or higher levels of material conflict. The Philippines, however, has been rocked by two insurgencies, a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist one, and the Moro conflict involving Muslim separatists.

Since its transition to democracy in 1988, the government of Pakistan has also been engaged in three counterinsurgency campaigns; against the Pakistani Taliban, Al-Queda, and the Islamic State. The country, moreover, experienced regime change in October 1999 when General Pervez Musharraf overthrew the country's democratically elected government in a coup. It is also important to point out that material conflict can refer to events involving foreign actors. As such, it is not surprising that this indicator is high for Pakistan: from 1996-2001, this nation was involved in the Afghan civil war and in 1999, fighting broke out between India and Pakistan in the Kargil district of Kashmir.[9] In the seven remaining countries, levels of material conflict are significantly lower post-transition, not only with respect to Pakistan and the Philippines, but also

9) For a list of conflicts involving Pakistan, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_involving_Pakistan.

South Korea.[10)]

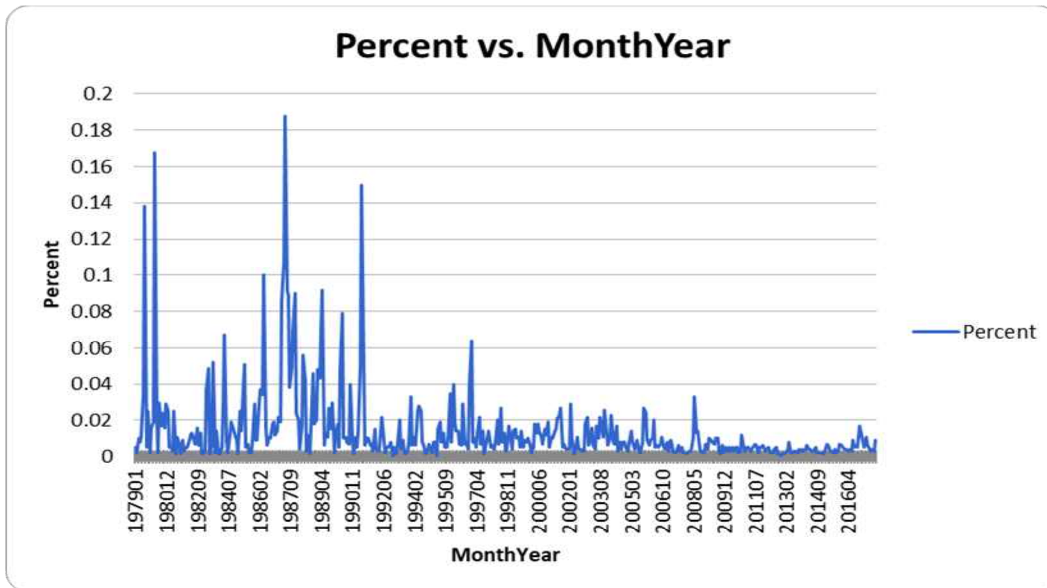
Figure 2 plots the ratio of news stories per month referring to the CAMEO category of *Protest* (14). This category groups events in the sub-categories of “demonstrate or rally”, “conduct hunger strike”, “conduct strike or boycott”, “obstruct passage, block”, and “protest violently, riot”. Once again, the raw count is multiplied by a factor that expresses protest as a percentage of news stories that month.[11)] This procedure normalizes press coverage, since there is a lot more news media today than in 1979. Figure 2 reveals a pattern that is very similar to the one depicted in Figure 1.

---

10) I use as the begining of the transition period the date in which the authoritarian regime began the process of political liberalization. This can include, but is not equivalent to, a general election held in conditions that are mostly free and fair. Liberalization could also come about as the result of a declaration announcing a series of political reforms (e.g., releasing of political prisoners, loosening of media censorship, etc.). This is indeed what occurred in South Korea with the June 29th, 1987 Declaration (6.29 선언). Once the political opening in the authoritarian regime is dated, the month following this date is the first unit of analysis for the post-transitional period. The dates chosen are as follows: Argentina, November 1983; Brazil, April 1985; Chile, April 1990; Pakistan, December 1988; Philippines, March 1986; South Korea, July 1987; and Taiwan, May 1991. For Greece, Portugal, and Spain, democratic transitions took place before GDELT coverage begins: 1974 in Greece and Portugal, and 1975 in Spain. As a result, the countries' post-authoritarian periods are not fully observed in the data.

11) See the blog entry http://fumiopen.blogspot.com/2014/08/gdelt-data-and-bigquery.html for identical data on a different country.

Figure 2. Volume of political protest in the Republic of Korea, 1979-2017



Source: GDELT in Google BigQuery website at https://cloudplatform.googleblog.com/2014/05/worlds-largest-event-dataset-now-publicly-available-in-google-bigquery.html (accessed August 20, 2017).

This time, we see two spikes following 1991, the first corresponding to the general strike of 1997, and the second to the first campaign involving the use of candlelights (2008). In May of that year, protesters rallied for almost a month before the riot police used water cannons, fire extinguishers, and arrests (Katsiaficas 2012, 402). The only other instance of a Third Wave democracy attaining a similar volume of protests (0.15) to that of Korea in May 1991 (the month registering the tallest spike following the country's democratic transition) is Spain in 1981. This observation, however, is neither representative of that country nor of late democratizers, as Spain experienced a failed military coup in February of that

year.

In sum, analysis of GELT data has revealed patterns of domestic conflict in Korea that are at once unique and encouraging. One limitation of our analysis is that it has not neatly separated illegal and violent protests from legal and peaceful ones. Sun-Chul Kim (2016, 2), using data collected from South Korean newspapers, reports a significant decrease in illegal and violent protests since the early 1990s.

Ⅲ. Information Technology and Activism: The Connectivity Revolution

With the new millennium, Koreans "developed a new form of protest culture" centered around the use of information technology to mobilize large numbers of citizens (Lee 2013, 551). What is the significance of information technology (IT) to the onset and diffusion of protest activity? There is some evidence from the Arab Spring that social media activity increases protest (Steinert-Threlkeld et al. 2015). IT might be a powerful tool when used by established organizations or ad-hoc groups to mobilize citizens. Recent work has focused in particular on non-governmental organizations (or NGOs) and their mobilizing potential (Boulding, 2014). The effect of NGOs on protest is said to be strongest in countries with weaker

democracies (as judged by the quality of their elections). NGOs, that is, mobilize citizens more in countries where parties are not strong and do not offer clear programmatic alternatives, elections are not very free and fair, and voters do not have a lot of confidence in the electoral process.

Boulding (forthcoming, 131) gauges the effectiveness of elections using the index of Party Institutionalization developed by the Inter-American Development Bank. I rely instead on the Party Institutionalization Index recently developed by the Varieties of Democracy Institute.[12] The index, which can characterize both democratic and non-democratic regimes, "measures the scope and depth of party institutionalization in a given country-year. Scope is measured by the proportion of parties that reach a threshold of minimal institutionalization, while the linkages parties establish with the masses and the elites define the depth" (Bizzarro et al. 2017). According to this index, party institutionalization has risen dramatically in South Korea since its founding (1948) and reached a high point in the 1990s. Scholars of Korean politics, however, describe Korean parties as unstable, personalistic, and lacking clear programmatic platforms other than a loose sense of regionalism.

A possibility I consider then is that it is not so much institutionalization of the party system, but the quality of elections, that shapes perceptions of democracy in South Korea

12) For an explanation of the index and comparison to existing ones, see https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/00/6d/006dc36d-9497-4d53-95f8-c117fa12c2f6/v-dem_working_paper_2017_48.pdf.

and, indirectly, the propensity of its citizens to engage in direct forms of claim-making. Scholars tend to assume that elections are free and fair in democracies, but irregularities that compromise these principles are common and undermine satisfaction with how the political system is performing (Norris 2018). According to Pippa Norris (2016, 6), South Korea holds "elections which display relatively high quality across all the components of the electoral cycle, compared with the rest of the world". Norris' analysis, however, is limited to the presidential election of December 2012, and she notes that "some issues [with electoral integrity] emerged" after her survey was completed.

Sun-Chul Kim argues that instability in the party system, distrust of political parties, and the minority status of reform governments in the 1990s, coupled with social movement cohesion and autonomy, all combined to create a pattern in which "the South Korean social movement sector emerged as a powerful political player that helped shaped South Korea's tumultuous post-authoritarian trajectory." (Kim 2016, 3). This trend is positive since according to Kim (2016, 7), "we observe clear signs of social movement institutionalization in the ideologies and strategies of social movement organizations, in the moderation of means of protest, and in how movement groups interact with the government."

"On the other hand, [Kim continues,] the persistent vitality of South Korean social movements, their defiant attitude, and

impacts on national politics challenge common expectations concerning social movement institutionalization in a new democracy." This begs asking what motivates Koreans to partake in social protests. If motivations are reformist and complement other forms of political participation, protest activity can be seen as salutary. Democratic theorists for example expect citizens to seek venues of influence in the political process when parties do not offer real programmatic choices. They also expect citizens to make their voices heard when the politicians break the law or abuse their power.

On the other hand, when a significant number of citizens protest because they feel excluded from the demos, protest arises out of a sense of grievance derived from marginalization, whether real or perceived (Dalton et al. 2010, 57). This sometimes manifests itself in a lack of trust towards the government, dissatisfaction with democracy as a political regime, or a sense that politicians and the government are unaccountable to the electorate. Generally speaking, if protestors aim to overthrow the established order or their actions take the place of more conventional forms of claim-making, protest activity poses a threat to democratic consolidation.

According to Boulding (forthcoming, 133), "[m]ore educated people protest more on average," as well as "[l]ess satisfied, left-leaning people who are both interested in politics and knowledgeable about [it]". This is in contrast to individuals who are satisfied but lean right ideologically and have little interest

in politics. Dalton et al. (2010) also report that left-leaning individuals are more likely to join in anti-government protests, particularly in developed democracies. Recent work comparing old and new democracies in Europe, on the other hand, casts doubt on the claim that a leftist ideology is more predictive of participation in protest movements (Kostelka and Rovny 2019, 1). Instead, according to these authors, "[p]rotesting tends to be more common in the ideological camp that opposed the pre-democratic political order. Simultaneously, it is culturally liberal individuals who more likely to embrace protest participation, independent of their left-right identification."

Findings about the historical roots of protest movements resonate with the Korean experience. As Kim (2016, 148) writes, conservatives had "no need to organize protests before DJ's [Kim Dae Jung's] presidency (Kim, J-S. 2003: 305) because the government had represented the conservative interests from the top-down". While this changed with the 1997 presidential election, the cleavage between a redistributive left and a free-market right has never been as prominent in South Korea as in other new democracies. In any case, the survey data I use to examine the determinants of protest participation does not ask respondents to locate themselves on a left-right spectrum.

Dalton et al. (2010) report that individuals in more economically and politically developed countries (the latter measured by how much the authorities uphold the rule of law)

protest more frequently, not because they are more dissatisfied with their government, but simply because they have the resources, opportunities, and motivation to do so. The decline in the intensity of protest in Korea since the early 1990s is compatible with this observation, but also prompts questions about what, in addition to their demographic characteristics, makes Koreans partake in social protests. In the following section, I use the Asian Barometer Survey to examine the determinants of protest activity in South Korea. This gives us a profile of protestors in 2006, 2011, and 2015.

Ⅳ. The Protestor in Korea: A Sociological Profile

The Asian Barometer Survey, wave Ⅳ, surveyed South Koreans from October to December 2015, fully a year before the first candlelight rallies. It covered the entire country with the exception of Cheju Island.[13] Thus, the Barometer provides us with an opportunity to study the determinants of protest activity close to the Revolution itself. The survey consists of a representative sample of 1200 adults. Table 1 tabulates information for the most important demographic variables in the survey.

13) See http://www.asianbarometer.org/survey/wave-4th-survey.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of survey participants

Variable	Category	N
Gender	Male	597
	Female	603
Education	No formal education	5
	Incomplete primary/elementary	11
	Complete primary/elementary	44
	Incomplete secondary/high school: technical	21
	Complete secondary/high school: technical	85
	Incomplete secondary/high school	51
	Complete secondary/high school	477
	Some university education	124
	University education completed	374
	Post-graduate degree	8
Income	lowest quintile	238
	fourth quintile	207
	third quintile	312
	second quintile	288
	first quintile	108
Total		1200

The dependent variable I wish to study is whether the survey participant attended a demonstration or protest march. There are four possible answers to this question: (1) "I have done this more than once; (2) "I have done this once"; (3) "I have not done this, but I might do it if something important happens in the future"; and (4) "I have not done this and I would not do it regardless of the situation". The question is particularly suitable because it captures a respondent's latent predisposition to protest, not just whether the respondent has already done so. Asking only if the respondent has participated would bias the results in favor of explanations that privilege

resources and political opportunity structures available for protest at the expense of the grievances motiving this kind of activity.

Respondents answered questions that reflect on the quality of the choices the political system makes available, in addition to questions about how the system is performing. Table 2 describes the survey prompts I use to explain the dependent variable, which also includes the demographic variables introduced in Table 1 plus the age of the respondent. With the exception of *age*, all independent variables have as their first value the number 1, followed by as many values as there are categories in the variable. Since *education*, as well as age, have more than eight categories, it is safe to enter them in the regression as continuous rather than as categorical variables. Following standard practice, I exclude from the analysis categories denoting individuals who are unsure about the question being asked or uncooperative in their response.

Table 2. Main independent variables of interest

Interested in politics	"How interested would you say you are in politics?" 1…4: very interested, somewhat, not very, not at all interested
Internet use	"How often do you use the Internet, including social media networks, to express your opinion about politics and government?" 1…7: not applicable, every day, several times a week, once or twice a week, a few times a month, a few times a year, practically never
Real choice	"How often do you think our elections offer the voters a real choice between different parties/candidates?" 1…4: always, most of the time, sometimes, rarely

Ability to participate	"I think I have the ability to participate in politics" 1…4: strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree
Government responsive	"How well do you think the government responds to what people want?" 1…4: very responsive, largely, not responsive, not at all responsive
Elections matter	"How much do you feel that having elections makes the government pay attention to what the people think?" 1…4: a good deal, quite a lot, not much, not at all
Trust government	"You can generally trust the people who run our government to do what is right" 1…4: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree
Satisfied	"On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy works in Korea. Are you …?" 1..4: very, somewhat, not very, not at all satisfied
Abuse of power	"How often do you think government leaders break the law or abuse their power? 1..4: always, most of the time, sometimes, rarely

Because the dependent variable is an ordered categorical outcome, I use ordered logistic regression. I flip the order of the categories so that coefficients have the intuitive interpretation that positive coefficients increase the likelihood of joining a protest and negative coefficients decrease it. In all cases, if the variable is categorical, the first category of the independent variable is the one used as a baseline for the remaining categories. In Table 3, I report in the fourth column the percent change in the odds of moving from one category of the dependent variable to the next for a unit increase in the independent variable.

Table 3. Determinants of Protest Participation in Korea, 2015

Independent variables	B	z	P>z	%	%StdX	SdofX
Gender						
Female	−0.225	−1.54	0.124	−20.2	−10.7	0.5
Age	0.002	0.235	0.814	0.2	2.3	14.5
Education	0.137	2.262	<u>0.024</u>	14.7	25.9	1.679
Income						
fourth quintile	−0.159	−0.677	0.499	−14.7	−6	0.386
third quintile	−0.416	−1.815	<u>0.069</u>	−34	−16.9	0.445
second quintile	−0.325	−1.394	0.163	−27.7	−13.1	0.434
first quintile	−0.323	−1.086	0.278	−27.6	−8.9	0.287
Interested						
somewhat	−0.127	−0.34	0.734	−11.9	−6	0.489
not very	−0.146	−0.385	0.7	−13.6	−6.9	0.492
not at all interested	−1.399	−3.151	<u>0.002</u>	−75.3	−40.1	0.366
Internet use						
every day	0.806	1.767	<u>0.077</u>	123.9	14.6	0.169
several times/week	0.754	1.84	<u>0.066</u>	112.4	15.1	0.186
once or twice/week	0.570	1.281	0.2	76.9	9.9	0.166
a few times a month	0.621	1.524	0.128	86.1	12.3	0.186
a few times a year	0.479	1.36	0.174	61.5	12.6	0.247
practically never	−0.203	−0.833	0.405	−18.3	−9.3	0.481
Real choice						
most of the time	0.190	0.669	0.504	20.9	9.6	0.482
sometimes	0.339	1.214	0.225	40.4	18.4	0.498
rarely	0.694	1.998	<u>0.046</u>	100.2	21.5	0.281
Ability to participate						
somewhat agree	0.258	0.512	0.609	29.4	11.9	0.437
somewhat disagree	0.019	0.038	0.97	1.9	1	0.5
strongly disagree	−0.373	−0.722	0.47	−31.1	−14.9	0.432
Government responsive						
largely	0.872	1.005	0.315	139.2	49.5	0.461
not responsive	1.020	1.167	0.243	177.4	64.9	0.49
not at all responsive	1.464	1.604	0.109	332.1	49.5	0.275

Elections matter						
quite a lot	−0.163	−0.404	0.686	−15	−7.8	0.498
not much	0.006	0.015	0.988	0.6	0.3	0.499
not at all	−0.530	−0.963	0.336	−41.1	−10.8	0.216
Trust government						
agree	0.240	0.519	0.604	27.1	11.1	0.438
disagree	0.275	0.605	0.545	31.6	14.7	0.499
strongly disagree	0.139	0.288	0.773	14.9	5.4	0.378
Satisfied						
somewhat	0.499	1.571	0.116	64.6	27.9	0.494
not very	0.362	1.059	0.289	43.5	18.3	0.466
not at all	−0.161	−0.311	0.756	−14.9	−3	0.191
Abuse of power						
most of the time	0.203	0.883	0.377	22.5	10.6	0.499
somestimes	0.305	1.24	0.215	35.7	15.2	0.462
rarely	0.687	1.194	0.232	98.8	8.5	0.118
Pseudo- R^2	0.075					
N	1057					

Notes: b = raw coefficient; z = z−score for test of b=0; P>|z| = p−value for z−test; % = percent change in odds for unit increase in X; %StdX = percent change in odds for standard deviation increase in X; %StdX = percent change in odds for standard deviation increase in X. Significant p−values have been underlined.

The first thing to note about the model reported in Table 3 is that an approximate likelihood−ratio test of whether the proportional−odds assumption of the model is met (i.e., whether we can assume that coefficients are equal across all four categories of the dependent variable) indicates that this is the case.[14] I also report the model's pseudo− R^2. While values for

14) The null hypthesis that coefficients are equal across categories is

this statistic tend to be considerably lower than R^2 values, the value our model exhibits indicates good fit.[15] More substantively, the variables that significantly shape protest participation are *education, income, interest in politics*, whether respondents use the *internet* to express political opinions, and whether they deem elections as contests that offer *real choices* to the electorate. Higher levels of educational attainment significantly increase the odds that a person will engage in protest activity. The variable *income* indicates that respondents in the third quintile of the income distribution are marginally less likely than respondents in the lowest quintile to engage in political protest. Noticeably, and compared to previous research, men and women emerge as likely to engage in protest activity.[16]

Meanwhile, individuals who use the internet every day or several times per week to express themselves politically are significantly more likely to become protestors than those who do not use the internet for this purpose. The same is true of those who think elections rarely offer voters a choice among contending programs as opposed to those who think they always do. As expected, those who are not at all interested in politics are significantly less likely to protest, compared to those who

---

accepted: $\chi^2(26) = 17.92$; Prob > $\chi^2 = 0.879$.

15) The measure of model fit estimated by Stata is McFadden's pseudo-R^2. Values between 0.2 and 0.4 indicate excellent fit. See https://stats.stackexchange.com/questions/82105/mcfaddens-pseudo-r2-interpretation.

16) Lee (2013) found that men were more likely to protest than women.

are. In terms of magnitude, frequent use of online fora for political expression increases the propensity to engage in protest activity the most. My findings on the relevance of IT to social activism echo those of Lee (2018, 1523), who surveyed a representative sample of adults as South Koreans held candlelight vigils in December 2016. Lee found that "the frequency of Facebook use was strongly and positively associated with protest activity" … because "Facebook use facilitated purposeful news consumption and political expression on the site, which in turn facilitated protest participation." The profile that emerges of the political protestor in South Korea in recent years then is of someone that is highly educated, very interested in politics, who uses online platforms regularly to express his or her views of government and politics, and who does not think elections are a meaningful exercise in choosing among contending forces and programs.

Ⅴ. Comparison with Earlier Waves

It is important to repeat this analysis with earlier waves of the Asian Barometer Survey to explore what changes, if any, have occurred in the factors prompting South Koreans to protest. The earliest year for which we have data on this form of political participation (wave II of the Survey) is September

of 2006, more than a year before the first candlelight campaign occurred. One important difference between earlier waves and the current one is that unlike wave IV, earlier questionnaires do not ask individuals whether they would consider protesting in the future. In asking whether they have ever partaken in this activity, individuals are simply given three choices: “never done”, “once”, and “more than once”. There aren’t enough individuals in the latter two categories, however, to model all the independent variables simultaneously. Consequently, I collapse categories two and three into a “have” category, and estimate a logit model.

Another difference between earlier waves and the current one is that the prompt asking individuals if they use the internet to express political opinions wasn’t available in waves II and III – although there was a prompt asking whether people use the internet and how frequently. In the analysis of wave III that follows, moreover, the fourth category of this variable (“several times a year”) predicts non-participation perfectly and is thus dropped by the statistical software. The same is true of the first category for the variable asking about trust in government (“strongly agree”). Finally, wave II does not include prompts about the importance of elections and how often government leaders break the law/abuse their power. These differences notwithstanding, Table 4 displays the results for wave III. As in the previous analysis, negative coefficients indicate a variable is likely to have caused individuals to refrain from joining protests; positive coefficients the opposite.

Table 4. Determinants of Protest Participation in Korea, 2011

Independent variables	B	z	P>z	%	%StdX	SdofX
Female	0.141	0.418	0.676	15.1	7.3	0.5
Age	−0.012	−0.792	0.428	−1.2	−15.7	14.723
Education	0.344	2.455	0.014	41.1	104.1	2.073
Income						
fourth quintile	−0.261	−0.59	0.555	−23	−10.3	0.418
third quintile	−0.937	−1.835	0.067	−60.8	−33.8	0.44
second quintile	−0.447	−0.899	0.369	−36.1	−14.6	0.352
first quintile	−0.999	−1.836	0.066	−63.2	−28.3	0.333
Interested						
somewhat	0.536	0.98	0.327	71	29.1	0.476
not very	0.046	0.078	0.938	4.7	2.3	0.491
not at all interested	−1.041	−1.15	0.25	−64.7	−32	0.37
Internet use						
at least once a week	−0.199	−0.376	0.707	−18	−7.2	0.377
at least once a month	0.360	0.443	0.658	43.3	6.3	0.17
hardly ever	0.820	1.267	0.205	126.9	18.9	0.211
never	0.592	0.869	0.385	80.7	27.9	0.416
Real choice						
most of the time	0.309	0.575	0.565	36.2	16.3	0.489
sometimes	0.571	1.037	0.3	77	32	0.487
rarely	0.287	0.407	0.684	33.2	8.3	0.278
Ability to participate						
somewhat agree	0.116	0.191	0.849	12.3	5.4	0.456
somewhat disagree	−0.504	−0.866	0.386	−39.6	−22.1	0.496
strongly disagree	−0.236	−0.371	0.711	−21	−9.3	0.414
Government responsive						
largely	−3.315	−3.344	0.001	−96.4	−78.3	0.461
not responsive	−3.651	−3.681	0.000	−97.4	−83.5	0.494
not at all responsive	−3.644	−3.352	0.001	−97.4	−68	0.313
Elections matter						
quite a lot	−0.871	−1.622	0.105	−58.2	−35.3	0.499
not much	−0.947	−1.717	0.086	−61.2	−37.1	0.489
not at all	−1.100	−1.284	0.199	−66.7	−25.7	0.27

Trust government						
somewhat disagree	−0.373	−0.745	0.456	−31.2	−15.1	0.439
strongly disagree	0.006	0.015	0.988	0.6	0.3	0.498
Satisfied						
somewhat	−0.260	−0.381	0.703	−22.9	−12.1	0.496
not very	−0.484	−0.692	0.489	−38.3	−20.7	0.479
not at all	1.105	1.328	0.184	202	23.5	0.191
Abuse of power						
most of the time	−0.068	−0.168	0.867	−6.6	−3.3	0.499
sometimes	−0.716	−1.405	0.16	−51.1	−27.4	0.447
rarely	0.477	0.547	0.584	61.2	4.6	0.093
Pseudo- R^2	0.158					
N	961					

Notes: b = raw coefficient; z = z−score for test of b=0; P>|z| = p−value for z−test; % = percent change in odds for unit increase in X; %StdX = percent change in odds for standard deviation increase in X; %StdX = percent change in odds for standard deviation increase in X. Significant p−values have been underlined.

As Table 4 reveals, five variables significantly predict protest activity in 2011: *education, income*, perceptions of government responsiveness, and weight given to elections. The findings thus resemble those for wave IV in the case of the first two variables, with one important difference: use of the internet is not associated with participation in political protests in wave Ⅲ. This is not surprising, however, as the question did not explicitly ask respondents to differentiate between expressing political opinions and anything else they may do on the internet.

The next two variables predicting participation (or lack thereof) in political protests, *government responsive* and *elections matter*, reveal that those who evaluate democratic

accountability negatively significantly abstain from protesting, in direct contrast with those who think the government is very responsive and elections matter a good deal. This is quite revealing because scholars tend to assume that voters in democracies hold politicians accountable. In fact, apathy may prevent citizens from holding their representatives accountable not only at the ballot box, but at the barricades as well. This, however, is not a sign of a healthy democracy.

Table 5 presents the results for wave II. In the narrative that follows, the third and fourth categories of the variable *internet use* ("at least once a month", "several times a year"), the first and fourth categories of *trust government* ("strongly agree", "strongly disagree"), and the first, third and fourth categories of *satisfied* ("not at all", "fairly", and "very") are dropped either because of collinearity or because they perfectly predict non participation. The same is true of the first category for the variable asking about *trust* in government.

Table 5. Determinants of Protest Participation in Korea, 2006

Independent variables	B	z	P>z	%	%StdX	SdofX
Female	−0.165	−0.351	0.726	−15.2	−7.9	0.499
age	−0.011	−0.592	0.554	−1.1	−15.2	14.639
education	0.173	1.224	0.221	18.9	37.4	1.837
Income						
fourth quintile	0.324	0.31	0.756	38.3	14.6	0.419
third quintile	0.307	0.313	0.754	35.9	14.8	0.45
second quintile	0.091	0.084	0.933	9.5	3.9	0.416
first quintile	−0.072	−0.064	0.949	−7	−2.7	0.38

Interested						
not very interested	1.288	1.012	0.312	262.7	88.6	0.493
somewhat interested	1.228	1.031	0.303	241.4	82.8	0.491
very interested	1.323	0.946	0.344	275.6	41.5	0.262
Internet use						
at least once a week	−0.253	−0.428	0.669	−22.3	−9.7	0.402
hardly ever	−0.728	−0.697	0.486	−51.7	−16.6	0.25
never	−2.322	−1.968	0.049	−90.2	−62.3	0.42
Real choice						
most of the time	−0.795	−1.032	0.302	−54.9	−30.7	0.461
sometimes	0.069	0.109	0.913	7.1	3.4	0.486
rarely	−0.376	−0.516	0.606	−31.3	−11.5	0.326
Ability to participate						
somewhat agree	−1.151	−1.62	0.105	−68.4	−40.2	0.447
somewhat disagree	−1.881	−2.706	0.007	−84.8	−61	0.5
strongly disagree	−1.047	−1.265	0.206	−64.9	−34.1	0.398
Government responsive						
largely	−4.459	−2.871	0.004	−98.8	−84.7	0.421
not very	−4.724	−3.497	0.000	−99.1	−90	0.487
not at all	−3.418	−2.496	0.013	−96.7	−70.8	0.36
Trust government						
somewhat agree	0.523	0.686	0.493	68.7	24.5	0.419
somewhat disagree	0.919	1.691	0.091	150.6	57.8	0.496
Satisfied						
not very satisfied	0.861	1.734	0.083	136.4	53.7	0.5
Pseudo- R^2	0. 178					
N	793					

Notes: b = raw coefficient; z = z−score for test of b=0; P>|z| = p−value for z−test; % = percent change in odds for unit increase in X; %StdX = percent change in odds for standard deviation increase in X; %StdX = percent change in odds for standard deviation increase in X. Significant p−values have been underlined.

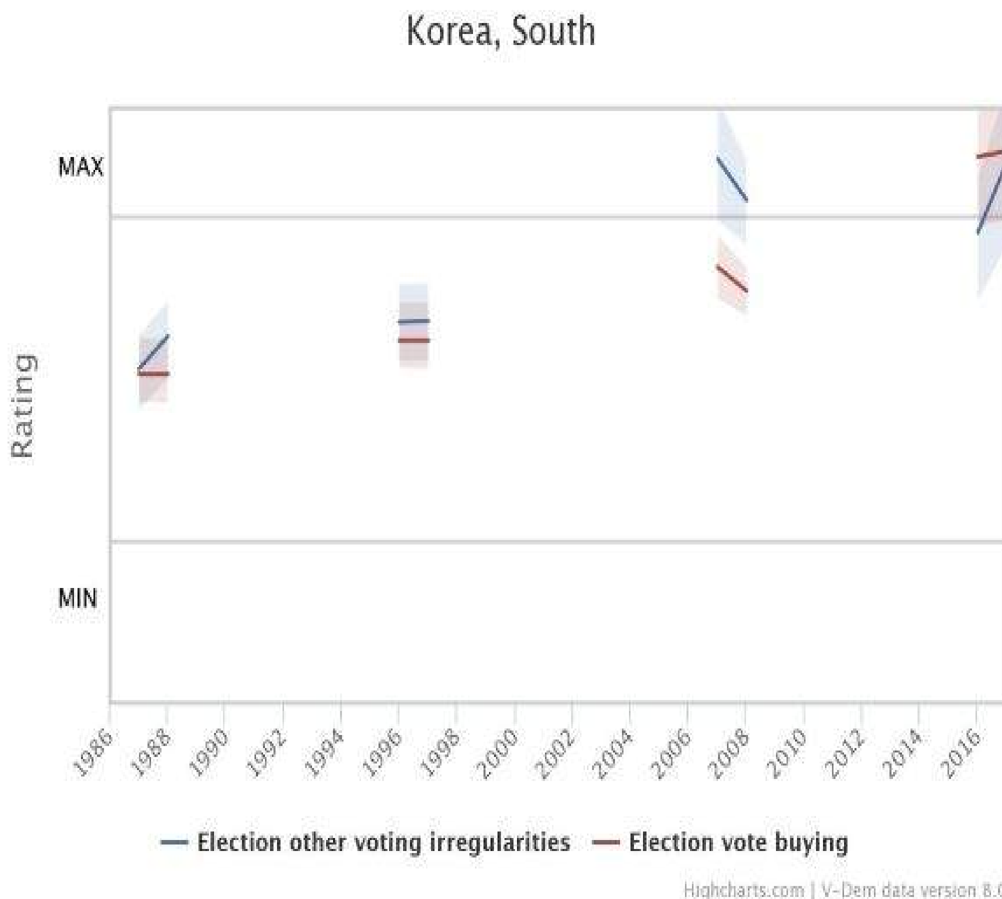
The results for wave Ⅱ resemble those for wave Ⅳ in regards to the effect of the internet on political participation.

Even though the question does not ask about using the internet to express political opinions, individuals who never use it are significantly less likely to become protesters. We also find, as in wave Ⅲ, that individuals who do not see the government as completely accountable or political participation as efficacious are significantly less likely to engage in political protest. Most importantly, however, individuals who are not very *satisfied* with the way democracy is working, and who are somewhat distrustful of the government, are significantly more likely to participate in political protests. Dissatisfaction with the platforms parties offer leading to protest is a sign of health in the democratic body politic because it indicates that citizens are using direct action as an alternative form of participation. The issue for them is not that their particular demands go unmet, but that the system as a whole is not very responsive. Engaging in direct action when the government is not fully trusted, on the other hand, is a worrying sign because it indicates that elections, in the eyes of citizens, are not meaningful contests among competing forces and individuals and there is nothing to take their place.

Figure 3 provides evidence that some of the disapproval Koreans have expressed about their political system in the past stems from the quality of the elections the country has held. The figure plots vote buying and other irregularities, according to the expert ratings compiled by the varieties of democracy (V-Dem) project. Data is available for four elections cycles

starting with the presidential election of 1987, the most recent being the 2016 legislative and the 2017 presidential elections. Although a causal link between electoral integrity and protest cannot be conclusively established on the basis of the data presented in the figure, elections seem to have attained increasing levels of fairness as the years go by.

Figure 3. Vote buying and other election-related irregularities in the Republic of Korea, 1987-present.



Source: V-Dem website at https://www.v-dem.net/en/analysis/CountryGraph/ (accessed March 13, 2019).

Note: Higher numbers refer to lower presence of irregularities (higher electoral integrity).

VI. Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Katsiaficas (2012, xxiii) claims that "[i]n few places other than Korea have social movements accomplished so much in the previous three decades." In this research note, I have tried to take stock of what recent protest movements mean for South Korea´s young democracy. Political protest seems to be reshaping politics around the world and the question arises as to whether vigorous protest activity by citizens is at best a distraction, at worst an obstacle, to the hard work of democratic bargaining and compromise. Using a combination of macro- and micro-level data, I have been able to examine the context surrounding the recent Candlelight Revolution in South Korea. This data, when considered alongside other work, can be read as evidence of a healthy democracy.

First, the level of material conflict has gradually declined in South Korea since its highs in the late 1970s and 1980s. Protests have also become less violent. It is true that in their number, they have remained steady since the early 1990s (Kim 2016, 4). Fewer mentions in the international media, however, are a sign that protests are gradually becoming routine affairs. Scholars have argued that popular mobilization is positively associated with commitment to and support for democracy in East Asia (Jung 2011, 403). In that case, Figures 1 and 2 provide evidence that anti-government protests are contributing

to the quality of South Korea's democratic system.

With respect to the individual level analysis, survey data revealed that the variables probing systemic performance explain propensity to protest in waves Ⅱ and Ⅲ, but not in wave Ⅱ. Wave Ⅳ revealed that those who see established parties as not offering meaningful choices are more inclined to take to the streets. South Korea, however, is not the only democracy where some are frustrated with the "supply side" of politics. The same phenomenon is seen even in established democracies. To the extent that this indicates a role for social movements to play, it is evidence of a healthy "social movement society".

Taken together, the survey data allows us to make two important points. First, by calling attention to the demands of citizens, protests have forced government officials to become a better interlocutor with society. We have clear evidence of this effect in the Candlelight Revolution, a protest cycle that began in response to concerns about corruption and lack of executive accountability, and that grew to calls for the unconditional ouster of President Park Geun-hye. This is an outcome that members of her party in the legislature at first refused to entertain, but were eventually forced to back after citizens exerted pressure on them to reconsider. We also see it in campaigns such as the Citizen's Coalition for the 2000 General Election in which the Coalition blacklisted dozens of politicians across the party spectrum as "corrupt" and "undemocratic". Backed by strong public support, it succeeded in preventing 59 politicians from

running for reelection and in instituting a more democratic, bottom-up process of party nomination (Kim 2016, chapter 3).

Secondly, by prompting the government to respond to citizens' needs, protests can result in policy changes that increase the legitimacy of the country's institutions. One clear example of this can be seen in how labor activism contributed to the creation of a welfare state in South Korea, something many would not have expected considering how much the country lagged (for its level of development) in the provision of social insurance. While redistributive policies may come about as a result of lobbying by interest groups and opposition parties, the labor movement in Korea, which has experienced extraordinary growth in density and cohesiveness (Lee 2012, 540), has also sponsored many strikes and demonstrations to demand more benefits and better working conditions for workers.[17] In the Korean case, we see then that a strong and cohesive civil society can, through its actions, lead to the enactment of policies that command broad popular support (Lee 2012).

In sum, my analysis of both event and survey data has shed new light not only on the dynamics of political protest in South Korea in recent decades, but also on the sociology of contentious political activity there. The analysis offers room for

---

17) According to the Cross-National Time-Series Data Archive, Korea registered one general strike per year in 1996, 1997, 2002, 2012, 2013 and 2016; and two in 2015. The Archive is available from New York University's Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, located at https://guides.nyu.edu/az.php?q=cross%20national%20time%20series.

optimism regarding the future of South Korea´s young democracy.

투고일: 2019년 1월 26일
심사일: 2019년 1월 27일
게재확정일: 2019년 3월 1일

Reference

Bizzarro, Fernando, Allen Hicken and Darin Self. 2017. "The V-Dem Party Institutionalization Index: A New Global Indicator (1900-2015)." *V-Dem Working Paper 2017:48*. Available at https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/00/6d/006dc36d-9497-4d53-95f8-c117fa12c2f6/v-dem_working_paper_2017_48.pdf.

Boulding, Carew E. forthcoming. "Schools for Democracy? The Role of NGOs in Protests in Democracies in the Global South." Moisés Arce and Roberta Rice, eds. *Protest and Democracy*. Calgary, Alberta, Canada: University of Calgary Press.

Chang, Paul Y. 2018. "Candlelight Protests in South Korea: The Legacies of Authoritarianism and Democratization." *Ewha Journal of Social Sciences* 34, No.1. pp.5-17. Available at https://ssrn.com/abstract=3171550 (access date: January 4, 2019).

Dalton, Russell, Alix Van Sickle and Steven Weldon. 2010. "The Individual-Institutional Nexus of Protest Behaviour." *British Journal of Political Science* 40, No. 1(January). pp.51-73.

Gunitsky, Seva. 2018. "Democratic Waves in Historical Perspective." *Perspectives on Politics* 16, No.3(September). pp.634-651.

Jung, Jai Kwan. 2011. "Popular Mobilization and Democratization: A Comparative Study of South Korea and Taiwan." *Korea Observer* 42, No. 3(Autumn). pp.377-411.

Katsiaficas, George. 2012. *Asia's Unknown Uprisings. Volume 1: South Korean Social Movements in the 20th Century*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.

Kim, Sun-Chul. 2016. *Democratization and Social Movements in*

South Korea: Defiant Institutionalization. New York: Routledge (Kindle version).

Klein, Graig R. and Patrick M. Regan. 2018. "Dynamics of Political Protests." *International Organization* 72, No.2(Spring). pp.485–521.

Kostelka, Filip and Jan Rovny. 2019. "It's Not the Left: Ideology and Protest Participation in Old and New Democracies." *Comparative Political Studies* DOI: 10.1177/010414019830717 (access date: March 11, 2019).

Norris, Pippa. 2019. "Do Perceptions of Electoral Malpractice Undermine Democratic Satisfaction? The US in Comparative Perspective." *International Political Science Review* 40, No.1(January). pp.5-22.

Norris, Pippa. 2016. "Electoral Integrity in East Asia." *The Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 12, No.1. pp.1-24.

Lee, Cheol Sung. 2012. "Associational Networks and Welfare States in Argentina, Brazil, South Korea, and Taiwan." *World Politics* 64, No. 3(July). pp.507-554.

Lee, Yoonkyung. 2013. "Digital Opportunities and Democratic Participation in Tech-Savvy Korea." *Korea Observer* 44, No.4. pp.545-568.

Lee, Sangwon. 2018. "The Role of Social Media in Protest Participation: The Case of Candlelight Vigils in South Korea." *International Journal of Communication* 12. pp.1523–1540.

Schrodt, Philip A. and Yilmaz, Ömür. 2016. "Event Type, Sub-state Actor, and Temporal Dimensions of the Dissent-Repression Relationship: Evidence from the Middle East." Harvey Starr and Stanley Dubinsky, eds. *The Isreali Conflict System: Analytic Approaches*, 9-31. New York: Routledge.

Steinert-Threlkeld, Zachary C., Delia Mocanu, Alessandro Vespignani and

James Fowler. 2015. "Online Social Networks and Offline Protest." *EPJ Data Science* 4, No.19. pp.1−9. Available at https://link.springer.com/article/10.1140/epjds/s13688−015−0056−y.

민주주의 맥락에서 파악한 한국의 촛불시위:
아시아 바로미터와 글로벌 이벤트 데이터를 통한 연구

José Alemán (Fordham University)

2016-2017년 한국의 촛불혁명에서 1,600만 명의 시민들은 평화롭고 성공적으로 박근혜 대통령의 탄핵을 요구했다. 본 논문은 이처럼 거대한 시위가 한국 민주주의의 저력을 반영하는 척도인지 탐구하고자 한다. 기존 연구는 동아시아에서 대중 동원의 경험이 시민들의 민주주의에 대한 지지에 긍정적으로 영향을 미친다고 주장했다. 이에 본 연구는 설문조사 자료와 이벤트 데이터를 사용하여 한국에서 시위 참여를 유도한 요인들을 분석하고, 촛불 혁명과 그 이전 시위들을 비교한다. 또한 시위 및 억압과 관련하여 한국과 다른 신생 민주주의 국가들을 비교한다. 이를 통해 본 연구는 두 가지 중요한 연구결과를 제시한다. 첫째, 한국에서의 정치 시위는 더 일상화되고 덜 폭력적으로 변화해왔다. 둘째, 시민들은 정치체제에 대한 불만보다는 민주주의의 질에 대한 우려로 인해 최근 시위에 참여해왔다. 이러한 연구결과는 한국에서 가장 최근 발생한 대중적 투쟁인 촛불혁명이 사실상 한국 민주주의의 질을 반영한다는 함의를 지닌다.

주제어: 촛불혁명, 국내정치갈등, 민주주의의 질