

Some Aspects of South Korean Youth Political Protest Culture of the Candlelight Rallies in the Information Technology Age

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The Paris Conference on Arts & Humanities 2023
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

The rapid progression in information and communication technologies has created a new paradigm of political participation in several countries worldwide. The diffusion of this technology is at the global forefront in South Korea. The South Korean youths have a growing presence of this through expanding social networks, new alliances, businesses, protests and advocacy campaigns, and websites expressing divergent views and perspectives. This paper traces the factors that promoted the protest culture among South Korean youths. It discusses their active political participation through the youth movement in light of increasing technological advances that have allowed unprecedented access to real-time information and knowledge sourcing. The specific focus is on the Candlelight Protests of 2008, which is the hallmark of youth's political force, gradually portraying and unfolding as the nation progresses. Attention is also paid to historical events in highlighting the youth social movement, rooted during the 1930s Great Depression up to the blooming of online activism. It is demonstrated that instantaneous access to information and online resources in South Korea has empowered Korean youths to contribute to organizations and society by demanding greater participation and involvement in national decision-making. It is ascertained that the boom in South Korean technologies has significantly impacted a legacy of an expanding South Korean youth protest movement. The discussion demonstrates that there is growth and change in the activities where the mobilization process has taken place in encouraging the protest culture among South Korean youth. These developments significantly impact the current and possible future formation of democracy.

Keywords: South Korea, Protest, Youth Movement, Online Activism and Political Participation

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Introduction

South Korea has experienced an elevated level of student-led political grouping and voices on the national scale through rallies. Within the nation is a strong protest culture that has historical links to the known Korean monarchy of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897), arising from Japanese imperialism. This historical passage of demonstrations has made protesting itself benign, a factor many political theorists believe is not desirable. South Korea has experienced decades of mass demonstrations, expressing outrage at the governmental policies related to the state's relationship with youths.

This paper attempts to answer how youth-led protests through political rallies impact South Korean democracy. Specifically, it examines the ways Korean youth protests evolved in Korean democracy. The focus of this paper arises from South Korea's impeachment of their President during the presidency of Park Geun-Hye on December 2017 following the parliament's decision, and she was the first democratically elected President to be removed from office. This happens through mass protests, which started with an on-campus college student protest. Next is an overview of the South Korean youth and their political engagement. It discusses the relationship between the government and the youth movement that evolved through each regime change. It is followed by a case study of South Korean protest history in section 3. It highlights the evolution of the youth movement through the Candlelight rallies, which pressured the South Korean government to cave into the need for democracy and political openness while identifying avenues for other forms of social and political movements to take root in the nation. This section also tracks the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s candlelight rallies incident as the post-democratic governance era of South Korea changed how youth protests were organized. Finally, the concluding comments note that youth-led rallies formed a modern voice and system to channel dissent, which created a new platform for large social movements to be accepted and recognized in South Korean democracy.

1. South Korean Youth and Their Political Engagement – An Overview

South Korea's demographic structure is marked by a significant component of the youth population. The South Korean Youth Law (2008) defines youth as those aged between 9 and 24. Some experts extend the definition of youth to include the age cohort between 30 and 34. In this paper, however, the statistical data on Korean youth cover those between 19 or 20 and 29.

Table 1 presents some statistics on the South Korean youth population at ten-year intervals against the high-income and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations and the world. One trend that outstands the youth population in South Korea, as well as the high-income and OECD countries and the world, is their gradual decline as the share of the total population.

Table 1. Some aspects of South Korea's youth demographics

Series Name	Country Name	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2021
Population ages 15-19, female (% of female population)	Korea, Rep.	11.3	10.1	7.9	6.6	4.6	4.5
	High income	8.2	7.3	6.6	6.1	5.4	5.4
	OECD members	8.5	7.7	7.0	6.5	5.9	5.8
	World	9.9	9.6	9.1	8.5	7.7	7.6
Population ages 15-19, male (% of male population)	Korea, Rep.	11.8	10.7	8.3	7.5	5.0	4.8
	High income	9.0	7.9	7.1	6.5	5.7	5.7
	OECD members	9.2	8.3	7.5	7.1	6.3	6.3
	World	10.3	9.9	9.4	8.9	8.1	8.0
Population ages 20-24, female (% of female population)	Korea, Rep.	10.7	10.1	8.2	5.8	6.0	5.8
	High income	8.1	7.6	6.7	6.3	5.7	5.6
	OECD members	8.2	7.8	7.0	6.6	6.1	6.1
	World	8.7	9.1	8.3	8.7	7.5	7.4
Population ages 20-24, male (% of male population)	Korea, Rep.	11.1	10.5	8.6	6.6	6.6	6.3
	High income	8.7	8.2	7.2	6.8	6.1	6.1
	OECD members	8.7	8.4	7.4	7.1	6.6	6.5
	World	9.0	9.3	8.5	9.0	7.9	7.8

Source: The World Bank (2022).

The voice of the youths, mostly students in South Korea, showed an increasing presence in the nation's political fabric over the long run. Despite the falling youth population over the long run, as shown in Table 1, the youths of South Korea are a significant force in political participation, accountability and having a national voice. While in the West, students and youth groups collectively formed a force of protests and resistance to issues incongruent with their beliefs (such as standing against the imperialistic designs of the United States in Vietnam), the South Korean youth as a force of resistance is a vibrant and a much younger aged group. A notable example that has left a prominent mark is the Kwangju or Kwangju: incident in the early 1980s, where the voice of the South Korean youths became paramount when their political dissent resulted in over two hundred deaths of students.

Since the Kwangju incident, the students of South Korea have long become a powerful political force in the country, striving to have a voice and participation in national decision-making. The origins of the Kwangju insurrection may be drawn to the authoritarianism of the Republic of Korea's first elected President, the anti-communist Syngman Rhee. During his almost eighteen years of rule, Rhee, as the first appointed President of Korea, continuously turned to a more repressive approach toward his political opposition and, to a large extent, the country's citizens. It precipitated massive student-led demonstrations in early 1960, leading to Rhee's ouster in April of that year. A brief parliamentary system of governance was followed by a military coup led by General Park Chung-Hee. He displaced the government in May 1961 and became the President the following year, holding office for the next 18 years.

The events of 1980 in Kwangju uninterruptedly impacted the Korean peninsula, its people and politics significantly. They led the protest against Japanese imperialism and *Syngman Rhee*, who was considered an American puppet. He is best known today as South Korea's first president and most infamous for his forced exile in 1960 due to a popular uprising. Throughout most of the pre-war period, Rhee was a mere advocate for a nation-state not permitted to exist. The leftist *Hangchongnyon* took control of Yonsei University in Seoul in 1996, which resulted in the arrest of 5,000 students during this event.

In terms of institutional governance, the youth affairs and policies in South Korea are overseen by the National Youth Commission. Established in 2005, the National Youth Commission is directly attached to the Office of the Prime Minister. The National Youth Commission brings youth fostering and youth protection together. It seeks to develop the basic plans of youth policies, activates participation, and promotes training, counselling and guidance.

The National Youth Commission developed a five-year youth development plan for 2008-2012 to be implemented nationally and by local governments in various regions. Policy goals include a safety net for those in crisis, ensuring multiple opportunities for young people, promoting youth participation and improving a young person's environment. The policy provides for implementing shelters for youth in crisis, after-school activities, extending youth rights concerning youth participation and a healthy media environment for young people (Innovations in Civic Participation, 2014).

South Korean youth involvement in politics reveals a progressive path towards active participation over time. The youth openly discusses political issues since they were eligible to register as voters at the age of nineteen years. However, the voting age increased to twenty during the 2007 Presidential Election (Lee, 2006). Hence, the population aged eighteen and above are automatically qualified to participate in the national voting process. There are exceptions to age, as seen in other nations.

South Korea's path towards strengthening democracy also brought a change in government policy and shaped a new nationalist spirit among the youth in South Korea. The victory of progressiveness in 1998 and the introduction of the Sunshine Policy by President Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-Hyun brought a new approach to the North Korean question. It greatly affected the youths, who adopted the more sympathetic view of their Northern neighbours and stressed the two's common "Korean" traits. This also led to stronger anti-American sentiments among the youths, especially when U.S. President George W Bush's statement labelling North Korea as an Axis of Evil.

The discussion that follows later attempts to elaborate on the Korean youth nationalism or activism and the cultural dynamism of today's Korean youth that bring to their protest through political participation demands. Emphasis is on South Korean young adults between the ages of nineteen to thirty. This group of young generation always was attention to tracking their tendencies of demand for equality, human rights and recognition from the government.

Inter-Korean nationalism exists among the people of North Korea. A significant proportion of youth-aged Koreans is raised in an affluent and democratized system, making them proud of their nationality allowed them to embrace their ethnic nationalism on two fronts. First, the assertive nationalism toward the world and towards the United States. Second, he is best known today as South Korea's first president and most infamous for his forced exile in 1960 due to a popular uprising. Throughout most of the pre-war period, Rhee was a mere advocate for a nation-state not permitted to exist. The young Koreans prefer peaceful coexistence with North Korea with no memories of war and less fear of the communist North. They are pressing for reforms to make the nation a consolidated democracy. According to Lee (2006), the political activism of this vibrant generation is limited and driven by selective events. Its immediate interests are focusing on culture and pragmatics.

South Korea is one of the world's highly technologically connected societies and the transformative influence of the information and communications technology revolution on political participation. Table 2 presents some basic statistics on the extent of information and communications technology diffusion in South Korea and compares it against the high-income and OECD countries and the world.

Table 2. Some aspects of technological diffusion in South Korea

Series Name	Country Name	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Fixed broadband subscriptions (per 100 people)	Korea, Rep.	..	..	8.2	34.7	43.5
	High income	..	..	1.7	26.1	35.8
	OECD members	..	..	1.4	24.0	33.3
	World	..	..	..	7.8	15.9
Fixed telephone subscriptions (per 100 people)	Korea, Rep.	7.1	30.9	54.6	57.6	46.5
	High income	28.1	40.6	54.0	46.9	35.7
	OECD members	26.0	37.3	49.8	43.1	32.7
	World	7.5	9.8	15.9	17.7	11.6
Individuals using the Internet (% of the population)	Korea, Rep.	..	0.0	44.7	83.7	96.5
	High income	..	0.3	29.9	71.6	89.6

	OECD members	..	0.2	27.0	66.5	86.3
	World	..	0.0	6.7	28.9	59.9
Mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people)	Korea, Rep.	0.0	0.2	56.6	102.5	137.5
	High income	0.0	1.1	48.4	109.5	122.3
	OECD members	0.0	1.0	44.0	101.8	116.9
	World	0.0	0.2	12.0	76.2	106.2

Source: The World Bank (2022). (...) indicates data not available.

The statistics in Table 2 provide strong evidence that South Koreans are much ahead of the countries in similar levels of development in terms of the usage of information and communications technology. The extent of the diffusion of information and communications technology has a strong bearing on youth's political involvement through efficiently organized groups voicing issues that impact their lives. Since 2002, the country's vibrant cyberspace transformed a vehicular accident involving two U.S. service members into a national furore that forced Koreans to reexamine the fifty-year relationship between the United States and South Korea. In response to the accident, the country's technologically savvy youth used the Internet to organize protests that grew into nightly gatherings at city centers nationwide. The Internet-borne, youth-driven mass protest has become a familiar and effective repertoire for activism in South Korea, even as the rest of the world struggles to find its position with this emerging model of political involvement. The first protest began in response to the deaths of two thirteen-year-old girls, Sin Hyo-sun and Sim Mi-sön, in a suburb of Seoul on June 13, 2002. The driver of a sixty-ton U.S. Army bridge carrier failed to notice the girls on the shoulder of a narrow local road, and the vehicle crushed them. The municipal government of Seoul saw an opportunity to showcase the country's grassroots dynamism and decided to allow crowds to congregate in the city center. Researchers have focused primarily on the Kwangju Uprising and the mass protests that swept the nation.

2. Progressive South Korean Youth Groups and Rallies for Evolution

This section covers the generational transitions, including the 3-8-6 and the 2030 generation, the internet café groups, the candlelight rallies and the post-2010 developments.

2.1 The 3-8-6 Generation

South Korean generational transformation is unique as compared to other cultural settings. The young, middle-aged and older Koreans have lived entirely different lives (Lee, 2004, pp. 43-49). The "3-8-6 generation," born in the 1960s, spent their rebellious youths under the authoritarian regime of Chung Doo-Hwan in the 1980s. They now make up the cohort of those between their mid-30s and mid-40s. In the first place, younger South Koreans are more assertive than their predecessors (J. K. Ryoo, 2004: 26; J. H. Lee, 2004: 59; S. J. Lee, 2004: 47-48).

Things become more complicated if one considers the prevalence of the negative image of the U.S. among the country's youth. In effect, the younger generations are behind the growing demand for a more assertive foreign policy. Roh Moo-hyun's emphasis on South

Korean autonomy vis-à-vis the United States attracted the attention of young voters during the 2002 presidential campaigns (H. K. Song, 2003). They voted overwhelmingly for Roh in the election. They claimed that Roh placed the voice of the young generation to play their role through Roh's governance policies. In the wake of this development, politicians became more attentive to the concerns of the younger generation, which in turn had a positive bearing on the Roh government's foreign policy. The other policy implication of the increasing political participation of South Korean youth relates to inter-Korean relations. The Korean youth have a predominantly progressive orientation (Ryoo, 2004). They tend to be more sympathetic to North Korea and support policies with less emphasis on reciprocity and economic aid (Kim, 2004).

Korean youth favour the inter-Korean rapprochement and support their country's domestic reform and independent foreign policy (Lee, 2004 & Kang, 2003). This also shows that the youth are continuously seeking participation in the political decision-making of this century. The policy pursued by Kim Dae-Jung has increased the tendency of the youth to favour inter-Korean cooperation (Kim, 2004).

This change in threat perception associated with inter-Korean nationalism has taken hold in the hearts of many younger Koreans (Lee, 2004 & Kim, 2004). Unlike their predecessors in the 50s and 60s, the youth of South Korea favour inter-Korean cooperation. They perceive North Korea as a "poor brother" whom they should assist rather than a threat, which makes them even more critical of U.S. foreign policy (Lee, 2004). Concerning this issue, Lee (2004) contends that "One visible corollary to inter-Korean nationalism among South Korean youths is their increasing suspicion of U.S. motives and intervention in the Korean peninsula."

The 3-8-6-age cohort also led the radical student movement to oppose Chun Doo-Hwan's rule, which was a Republic of Korea Army General and contributed to the successful democratic transition in 1987. This provides strong evidence that the most progressive age cohort exists with much political capital. The sense of empowerment that youth felt during the democratic transition has carried on to the current Korean government's reform drive, in which a significant number of activists from this age cohort are participating.

In conclusion, today's new generation of Korean youths differs from the 3-8-6 age cohort and the older generation. Labelled as the fast and cyber community generation with a passion for technology as part of their life. In 2022, the internet acceptance rate of South Koreans aged in their twenties and thirties was almost 100 per cent (*Statistica*, 2022). There were 50.29 million internet users in South Korea in January 2022. Internet users in South Korea rose by 543 thousand (+1.1%) between 2021 and 2022. The internet penetration rate stood at 98.0% as a share of the total population at the beginning of 2022 (www.datareportal.com). They constantly call and send text messages through their mobile phones. The telecommunication provider in the mobile phone purchase provided Internet access. The advanced information technology infrastructure in South Korea allows the youth generation to network globally with other communities from the other side of the world. They became assiduous in their daily life and hungered for information and data to keep updated with everything that satisfied them.

2.2 The 2030 Generation

The 2030 generation is referred to as the young people in their twenties and early thirties whose political memories were forged after the fall of the South Korean military dictatorship

in the 1980s. This generation plays a significant role in shaping the new political paradigm. This generation had a much stronger exposure to the values of democracy than the previous generation. According to Han (2007), before 2002, the 2030 Generation was oriented toward rampant individualism. Some scholars argued that it was technologically wired and demonstrated indifferent behaviour toward politics (Kim, 2002; Gallup Korea, 2003; Huh, 2003; Lee, 2006; Roh, 2002; Song, 2005; Yang, 2002; Yoo, 2002; Watts, 2003). The political consciousness among the 2030 Generation has strengthened due to the impressive investments in the information and communications technologies infrastructure. This group of young generations has subsequently increased the diversity fragmentation of examining their interests in politics.

The 2030 generation is also known as Generation Y, echo boomers, or Internet generation and is considered the fastest-growing group during 2015. They were the young generation born in Korea from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s (Lee, 2015). This generation was keener to be politically active than the older generation or the 3-8-6-age cohort. Both are very pragmatic and well-driven by massive materialistic mass culture. Nationalism, a term used to describe these groups, significantly impacts the community, as they are more responsive to cultural signs and symbols rather than political slogans. Even though they prefer the culture and nationalistic way of life, this does not mean the level of political involvement of the youth can be measured. For instance, the Candlelight protest in 2002 showed their political participation in the street demonstration. However, this is event-driven and more perceived as global or universal values.

The Candlelight rallies (sometimes known as the Candlelight Struggle, Candlelight Revolution, or Candlelight Cultural Festival) were attended with humorous props, banners, and candles. This method of protesting began in 1992 to oppose online service charging. In 2002 following the Yangju highway incident, it materialized into the impeachment of Roh Moo-hyun in 2004. They were re-used in the 2008 U.S. beef protests and repeated in the 2016-2018 President Park Geun-Hye protests.

Consequently, the 2008 Candlelight protests were the mass public demonstration since the 1987 Democratic Movement and continued for the longest time in the history of South Korea. The protest has sparked the emergence of the online space whereby public opinions spread online. This medium has become crucial in translating public opinion into offline demonstrations (Seongyi & Woo, 2011). Amazingly, more than 50 per cent of the demonstrators who participated were teenagers. The teenagers were voice-full, wanting to be heard by the government and freely criticize the policymakers. This demonstration was marked in Korean history when teenagers demonstrated in large numbers for the first time and led to national attention. The Candlelight protests were related to unfavourable economic and social policies.

2.3 The Internet Cafes Group

Internet cafes group also played a significant role in the reaction to the protest in 2008. *Accurate Picture*, *JjukBbang*, *Candle Girls Korea* and *Association of Teens* cafes were among the activist-type that sought to repossess the government's decision to resume U.S. beef imports. *National Youth and Student Coalition* and *National Middle and High School Students Coalition* were branded as political mass organizations that demanded youth education reforms and human rights. Youth cyber activism became a massive advantage for the demonstration to highlight the impact of international matters on the national agenda.

They demanded to be selected as political actors, given political rights and involved in other political activities. Nevertheless, continuous Korean youth political involvement was claimed as politically inclined and event-driven, resulting in declination support from the Korean government due to the age limitations and process of the party members.

In addition, there is an isolation of issues in South Korea that conventional media and new media portray in South Korean culture. The involvement of the civil rights movements and the recent press reached scaled highly only in the rally. The South Korean media has been dictating the people, regardless of whether they are controlling or responding to it.

2.4 Youth Movement and Candlelight rallies

i. The 1990s

The industrialization of South Korea has been achieved at the expense of the repression of civil and political rights, creating an ever-widening gap between the poor and the rich. This has, in itself, provided severe issues for the student movement beginning in the 1970s. For example, September 26, 1992, witnessed the first candlelight rally when online users gathered to dispute the fees of the online service of Kotel (Korea Telecom). This rally was the starting point where the netizens began to influence society to go beyond online and offline on essential issues through Korea P.C. Telecom company communications and the Internet. In the 1990s, they are opposing the changing of online services. Following the first candlelight rally, netizens became influential by going beyond online and offline on essential issues through P.C. communications and the Internet.

ii. 2000s – The Netizens Generation

The second rally was on November 20, 2002, when the U.S. military court passed its first not-guilty verdict for the soldiers involved in the incident of female youths' deaths. It triggered the re-emergence of rallies to honour the girls' deaths as their crushed bodies were displayed online as a mark of respecting their deaths. The online community perceived this incident as a National Tragedy. It resulted in nationwide candlelight vigils being held through internet cafe gatherings to mourn the girls' death collectively. About 30,000 Koreans gathered in Gwanghwamun on November 30, 2002, for the initial mass candlelight vigil to commemorate the deaths and show a form of repulsion to injustice and death. This has been portrayed as the mishandling of the U.S. and the Korean government to mobilize awareness. As a result, the protesters had three demands (1) that the South Korean court handles the action case, and (2) that an amendment be made to The Status of Forces Agreement to eliminate the U.S. autonomy of service members that have evaded the South Korean criminal laws and (3) President Bush must issue a statement of apology for the middle school girls death. Some Korean media sources labelled this as anti-American. Others viewed it as a platform for the young generation's self-expression.

On December 7, 2002, the netizens who participated in one of the 43 city candlelight protests in Gwanghwamun marched through the police barriers to the U.S. Embassy, persistently asking them to apologize and seek appropriate justice. The last mass vigil was on December 14, 2002, with a gathering of approximately 100,000 people from over 60 cities and 15 countries at the Gwanghwamun Square in Seoul. Following this, candlelight vigils have become a prime protest culture among youth in South Korea.

This was followed by a 2004 incident when President Roh Moo-hyun expressed no remorse about his brother's bribery and blamed the construction company executive for exploiting his

brother. In addition, Roh expressed his support for the Uri Party and refrained from apologizing publicly. Many citizens congregated at the National Assembly and descended into the streets, yelling, "Impeach the president." Candles filled the streets of Seoul, from Gwanghwamun to Daehanmun Gate in Deoksugung Palace. Such rallies continued throughout the nation until the Constitutional Court rejected the impeachment motion.

2004 witnessed a rape case in Miryang, Gyeongsangnam-do, where forty-four high school students lured a student from Ulsan to an online chat. She later raped her for a year. This incident led to a candlelight rally by the internet masses, who expressed their condemnation of such a terrible crime, the "Mild Middle School Girls Sexual Assault" case. They questioned the police's preliminary investigation by rallying in front of Kyobo Book Center (Jongno-gu, Seoul) and Lotte Department Store (Seomyeon, Busan). Internet groups proposed holding candlelight protests to force the police for a thorough criminal investigation. Much of this gathering at the candlelight protests voluntarily supported free speech.

Candlelight Girl protests gatherings in Cheonggye Plaza on May 2, 2008, held candles as a symbol of the negotiations for more than 30 months of beef imports and imports ban of mad cow disease in the U.S. The protests took place for more than 100 days spread across Korea, sparked by middle and high school students, with a million couples participating, including homemakers. Interestingly, the protests did not stop and were followed by candlelight vigils protesting the U.S. beef imports. President Lee Myung-bak apologized when spontaneous demonstrations spread widely through the Internet and cell phone. The protest was called the Candlelight Cultural Festival. It was held as a cultural festival to avoid violating the Act on Assembly and Demonstration provisions, which prohibits outdoor rallies or demonstrations after sunset. The prominent feature of this rally was that voluntary individuals called leading groups (students, workers, and strollers) joined in the event to express their discontent peacefully without violence.

On May 2, 2008, the streets of central Seoul city were occupied with thousands of secondary and college students holding a candlelight vigil through text messages and the Internet. The candlelight protests became a daily event, with an estimated 100,000 people voicing their opposition and calling for the impeachment of President Lee. Protests extended to Busan, Chuncheon, Daegu and Gwangju when the government announced that they would attempt to restrict certain parts of U.S. beef imports due to the mad cow disease on May 22, 2008. On June 30, a wave of the march was headed by protests, including hundreds of Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) workers that lasted for four months. It is marked as a mass movement that originated from the South Korean government's failure to recognize the people's trust. It has brought 211 arrests of protestors for displaying political slogans and signs against the Korean government.

In conclusion, during the 2000s Candlelight rallies, the Yangju highway incident, a protest against the Roh-Moo-Hyun president's impeachment, a gang rape of a middle school in Miryang and opposition to the U.S. beef imports marked a mass movement that was directly linked to the South Korean government's failure to recognize the trust of the people.

iii. 2010s

On April 16, 2014, some 304 out of 476 passengers (including 250 students from Danwon High School) were considered to be killed or missing when the Incheon-Jeju Port regular passenger ship operated by Cheonghae Shipping Company sank near Gwanmae Island, Jindo-

gun, Jeollanam-do (Park Dong-hae, 2016). On May 31, rallies were held in Seoul, Ansan and Busan to pay honour to the Ferry Sewol accident victims. The community's countermeasure meeting for the Ferry Sewol Disaster included 800 civic groups marking a candlelight vigil in memory of Ferry Sewol at Cheonggye Plaza in Seoul, with 20,000 people gathered that continued till the 23rd session in 2017 (Kim Sae-Bom, 2016).

In September 2016, 'Park Geun-Hye Choi Soon-Sil Gate' proclaimed that President Park Geun-Hye's official secretary Choi Soon-Sil intervened in the national administration. A candlelight rally marked it by over 1500 civil society organizations on November 12, where the '2016 People's Citizens' Convention' hosted by the 'Park Geun-Hye regime retirement emergency action.' They opened in Seoul's Gwanghwamun area, with one million people participating. On November 26, 2016, approximately 1.9 million people (330,000 police officers) from the nation participated in the largest demonstration in Korean history. On December 3, the prosecution of President Park Geun-Hye was confirmed, resulting in the suspension of the presidency.

The candlelight rally demanded President Park Geun-Hye's resignation. On March 10, the Constitutional Court's impeachment trial unanimously cited the impeachment prosecution of the President, who was eventually dismissed from the presidency. The rally continued into the following year, where the number of participants exceeded 15 million from March 9 to the 20th candlelight rally. The candlelight vigil attracted the world's attention by awakening many violent citizens to protest peacefully (Hansol Ko, 2016).

The protests known as the Candlelight Revolution were participated by over 2 million people in Gwanghwamun Square in early December. The Candlelight Revolution pressured the National Assembly into actioning the impeachment of Park, with the Constitutional Court approving the motion on March 11, 2017. As the rally's voices strengthened, on February 13, 2018, Choi was imprisoned for 20 years, guilty of corruption, coercion, abuse of power, and leaking classified information.

In conclusion, the series of rallies during this period was only an act of citizens who gathered opinions by holding candles without much progress or remuneration. This was an ambassador with historical significance in the world in that he made a move, prosecuted the impeachment of the President, was dismissed after approval, and even elected a new President. In summary, the rallies showed a dynamic formation of online communities and mass internet-based mass gatherings in the country, especially during the impeachment of Park Geun-Hye.

Conclusion

The history of South Korean democracy has been held together by the goals and determination of South Korean youth. This paper has shown that youth-led protests have impacted South Korean democracy and has many agenda underlying the youth movement. Consequently, the youth succeed in pushing the government to acknowledge and recognize their demands and give impetus to the remainder of the population to demand and transit alongside them, including providing space for other social movements. This paper has discussed the chronology of youth involvement in the Candlelight rallies to reflect the protest and practice of democracy in the country. To conclude, South Korean youth protest in the Candlelight rallies is one of the best examples to study the evolution of the youth movement or the student-led movement as a model to look into other youth movements in other countries.

Acknowledgements

We are deeply grateful to all those who contributed to the success of this research project. First and foremost, we would like to thank Korea Foundation for Advance Studies (KFAS), Seoul National University, and Sultan Qaboos University for their guidance, support, and encouragement throughout the entire process. Thank you to my mentor, Professor Dr. Azmat Gani for his relentless support and guidance in preparing the paper.

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