DRIFTING CIVIL SOCIETY IN SOUTH KOREA: DE-GLOBALIZATION, POPULISM, AND DIGITAL REVOLUTION

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Abstract:

We are witnessing the decline of democracy and the resurgence of authoritarianism worldwide. Undoubtedly, democracy is in retreat, threatening to undermine political rights and civil liberties throughout the pandemic era. The politics of distrust endangers representative democracy characterized by participation and contestation. Populism makes a comeback to threaten party politics while widening political and ideological cleavages among citizens. This paper argues that the pandemic and de-globalization has brought in sovereignty crisis in terms of making national policies on migration, refugees, inequality, polarization, job losses, hatred, and so on. We highlight that the rise of populism and digital revolution have threatened and even drifted civil society in South Korea.

Digital-based Populist movements try to mobilize mass support to directly link to the people. We examine populist tendencies in South Korea that mobilize supporters through new social media characterized by fake news, misinformation, and biased broadcasting. Korean civil society has become too divided to play a part in empowering citizens. The future of Korean democracy would be dependent upon whether a robust civil society can be revitalized for civic empowerment. We suggest that civil dialogues between two antagonistic political camps will play a key role.

Key words: de-globalization, populism, digital revolution, civic empowerment, South Korea

I. Introduction

We are witnessing the decline of democracy and the resurgence of authoritarianism worldwide. Although classic coups d'etat, mass insurrection, and election rigging have declined in frequency, democracy has been in a global decline for the last two decades (Bermeo, 2016; Diamond, 2015). Importantly enough, democracy is gradually toppled by stealth (Przeworski, 2019). The democratic reversals have negatively affected freedom of expression, robustness of civil society, and the rule of law due to state surveillance, manipulation of social media, and curbs on personal autonomy (Puddington, 2015). This is close to what scholars have labeled 'democratic recession', 'democratic backsliding', or 'democratic deconsolidation'.

In the wake of democratic retreat, we contend that populists gain power not only in advanced but in new democracies. Citizens who have distrust in a representative system are increasingly open to populist appeals to seek an alternative system of government. Populism is in comeback to threaten democratic norms and institutions to the detriment of existing center-right or center-left party politics. In developing democracies in Latin America and Asia, as well as in established democracies in Europe and the United States, populism has become a significant feature of modern politics both in far-left and far-right directions. The

outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has intensified such populist trends in the pretense of nationalistic rhetoric.

Although South Korea (hereafter Korea) has expanded the space of civil society to keep democracy alive since a year-long candlelight protest in 2016 and 2017, the horizontal accountability necessary between the executive, legislature, and judiciary as well as the vertical accountability of government for civil society have not improved in a significant way. We highlight that populist trends have steadily increased to consolidate political support from the populace regardless of whether the government remained conservative or liberal. It is necessary to keep watching over in what ways Korean democracy will change in near future.

Given these, this paper tries to explore the relationship among de-globalization, populism, and digital revolution through a case study of Korea. First of all, we review the rise of populism in the global contexts and Then, we will discuss decreasing dynamics of democracy with the rise of populism in Korea. Finally, we contend that civic empowerment among Korean citizens would be the best solution to get out of the trap of populism and revitalize its robustness from a drifting civil society under the threat of digital revolution.

II. The Global Rise of Populism

The specter of populism hangs around the globe. Populism has become a *Zeitgeist* in a sense (Mudde, 2004). There has appeared even a new political system called populacracy (Fieschi, 2019). Since social democracy is succumbed to a neoliberal logic of globalization, it is on the shoulder of center-left populist parties to federate all democratic struggles towards a fully liberated society. Populist parties have risen in many European countries in the form of far-right or far-left extremism mostly around the issue dealing with immigrants and religious minorities. <Figure 1> reveals that populist appearance is strongest in Latin America, followed by Asia and Europe. In terms of vote share of populist parties, Europe is located between Latin America and Asia. In Europe, populist parties gained their average voter support of about 20% in 2020. Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain are closer to left-wing populism, while FN in France and the FPO in Austria represent right-wing populism.

Figure 1. Rise of Populist Parties in Europe, Asia, and Latin America
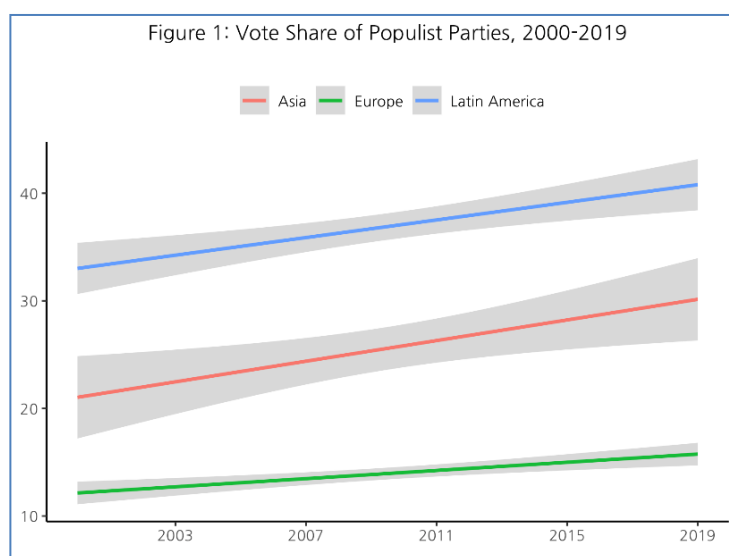
Source: Grzymala-Busse et al. 2020. Global Populisms Project, Stanford University. (https://fsi.stanford.edu/global-populisms/content/vote-populists)

There are two things of importance here. First, while citizens carry great doubts regarding electoral votes, there are increasing activism on the streets and growing resentment online. This politics of distrust endangers democracy characterized by participation and contestation. Second, political parties do not play a role as gatekeepers anymore. It is noteworthy to see that elected leaders by the people tend to discard democratic norms and institutions. Mutual toleration and institutional forbearance are gone. (Frantz and Wright, 2019: 8).

We have witnessed many populist leaders such as Russia's Putin, China's Xi Jinping, Japan's Abe, Turkey's Erdoğan, America's Trump, the Philippines' Duterte, Venezuela's Chavez and Maduro, Brazil's Bolsonaro, and so on. These populist leaders manifest strong leadership, resulting in kind of populism coupled with authoritarianism. They display what can be understood as a personalist dictatorship (Frantz and Wright, 2019: 9). In the throes of globalization, citizens feel discomfort and threat that provide soils for the surge of authoritarian populists emphasizing nativist nationalism, that is, "the nation first." The rise of populism is due to a couple of mixed factors. In developing democracies, increasing economic inequality and social disparity are mostly responsible for populist rising; however, in established democracies, it is the cultural unease against ongoing social change towards more egalitarianism regarding gender, racial and generational equality, and more openness to diversity and LGBTQ rights.

It is important to emphasize that regardless of established and developing democracies, citizens are thirsty of participation and representation in the political process. Populist followers in established democracies are those who can be identified as older, whiter, more rural, and less well educated, while populist supporters in developing democracies are those who are represented by poorer and uneducated in urban and rural areas, including even more educated and the young (Gibson, 2020). We think that democracy's renewed fragility lies in the fact that in the process of neoliberal globalization, restructuring tends to exacerbate socio-economic base of democracy, namely high unemployment, the shrinking middle class, the disharmony between freedom and equality, and impairing of rule of law. In what follows, a new theoretical framework and empirical findings are discussed in terms of the relationship between globalization, democracy, and populism. In the process of globalization, capital, labor, goods, knowledge, and information are exchanged beyond national boundaries. Over the last couple of decades, threats coming from deepening inequality and disparity on a world scale have gradually outweighed opportunities of the compression of world with global consciousness.

III. Weakened Democracy and Strengthened Populism in Korea

Democracy is a political system that is based on inclusion, participation and contestation with equality on voting and access to information (Dahl, 1998: 38). It could be a good mechanism to solve social conflicts and political cleavages in modern politics. However, the contradiction between equality of all and majority rule is central to democracy. The unity of the people based on the principle of equality of all is impossible. Majority rule unless protecting the interests of minority gives rise to ceaseless antagonism. We believe that populism is integral to the imperfectness of liberal democracy, that is, the weakness of representative political system (Muller, 2016: 101). Populism as a deviance occurs from the distrust of a modern representative democracy. Populism tends to undermine the possibility of democratic contestation and compromise in the name of race, ethnicity, and nationality.

In Korea, the political parties are leader-oriented rather than program-oriented (Kim, 1998: 138). It is not unusual to disband or create parties at a leader's disposal. The average life span of parties is about five years. Party politics are doomed to be volatile, fluid and unstable. Political parties do not function to mediate conflicting interests among social classes and groups, much less to direct national

policies. As a conduit of democracy, they do not have solid class and group base in a civil society. Based on regional support mediated by personal ties, they are rather the tools for regional leaders to use in their pursuit of winning presidency. Yet behind the phenomenon of the so-called "imperial president" (Schlesinger Jr., 1973) are civilian presidents who used to be undemocratic during their struggle against authoritarianism. They are more familiar with authority, hierarchy, and obedience. Under a political culture in which personalized authority outweighs institutional power, they have tended to enjoy supreme power as executive leaders. A strong presidency is an outcome of the personalization of power embedded in the Confucian hierarchical political culture.

Particularism in the form of clientelism and nepotism coexists with the formal rules and institutions of polyarchy. Democracy, to borrow his words, is 'informally institutionalized' (O'Donnell, 2001: 114). In contrast to institutionalized political systems, delegative democracy is non-institutionalized. It refers to the practice of executive authority doing whatever it sees fit for the country while pretending to be deputized to do so by the populace. It is thus hostile to the strengthening of political institutions, resulting in weak horizontal and vertical accountability. A big gap exists between the president and citizens, together with a concentration of power in the executive. Democracy cannot become institutionalized. This breed of deformed polyarchy is characterized by a concentration of power in executive hands and a populist leadership style of the elected president. In Korea today, elections are losing importance in the midst of a democracy that has dual characteristics in power and distribution. This kind of democracy is good for global capitalism that seeks to expand accumulation through competition and efficiency without due concern for social provision and economic justice. As Putnam (1997: 59) observed earlier, "while democracy is spreading globally, it is also eroding locally." Globalization and restructuring have worked to provide a soil for procedural democracy with delayed consolidation of democracy.

Democracy has lost confidence: citizens do not want to go to the ballot box, because of rising economic anxiety, political frustration, and cultural unease. They go on the Internet and rely on street activism. Presidents do not hesitate to discard democratic norms and institutions, initiating direct contact with citizens via social media. This tends to weaken liberal democracy that in result brings in distrust in a representative political system. Populism rises in the increasing thin space of representative democracy (Rosanvallon, 2008).

IV. Drifting Korean Civil Society

As mentioned above, populism has become a salient feature of modern politics not only in advanced democracies in Europe and the United States but also in developing democracies in Latin America and Asia. It can be characterized by a lack of coherent ideology with strong rhetoric. Its political orientation could be either left-wing or right-wing oriented, with an element of inclusion or exclusion. It would be misleading to dichotomize populism between the good and the bad. Rather it would be wise to evaluate the outcomes of populist politics. Contemporary cases in Europe, Asia, and Latin America show us that they have not turned out attractively.

According Mouffe (2018: 17-18), there exists a confrontation between the principle of the popular sovereignty and the principle of technocratic guardianship. Right-wing populists' side with the latter, whereas the left-wing populists with the former. Regarding popular sovereignty as the essence of democracy, she claims that right-wing populists could succumb to nationalistic authoritarian forms of neoliberal globalization under the principle of technocratic guardianship. On the contrary, she maintains that left-wing populists could revive the plural and radical democracy by sticking to the principle of popular sovereignty. She wants to resuscitate the participatory, substantial democracy to make use of the 'populist moment'. To the best of my knowledge, however, there has never appeared to be something close to a full participatory and substantial democracy in the present world.

The Moon Jae-In regime (April 2017 – March 2022) in Korea made every effort to maximize participatory and substantial democracy geared to the principle of popular sovereignty. Moon regime has presented the idea of "an inclusive state," with a vision of the nation, "a country for all – an inclusive

state for everybody to live well together." In fact, "inclusion" becomes an important value of his administration and is closely associated with his main economic policy of "income-led growth," an important part of "inclusive growth" (Seong et al., 2017). The Moon regime has examined major political-economic systems in the world and identified four distinct models: the developmental state model (Korea and other East Asian countries), the free market model (The U. S. and the U. K.), the European Continental model of social market economy (Germany, France, etc.), and the Nordic model of social welfare economy (Sweden, Norway, Finland, etc.).

From comparative analysis, the regime found that the European social market economy model is the only model that has succeeded social cohesion and economic growth at the same time. It then identified three core principles that are responsible for the success of the European model. They are inclusiveness, innovation, and flexibility. It is too early to assess the Moon Jae-In regime's social policy, especially the policy advocating for an "innovative, inclusive state". But it seems to be true that the Moon regime has tried hard to shift the paradigm from the neoliberal developmental state to what they call an "innovative, inclusive state", with substantial public supports and greater possibilities.

Social policy is inevitably connected to economic policy because a substantial amount of financial input is necessary for social services and welfare programs, which in turn affects national economy. The Moon regime has proposed the "people-centric economy," instead of the previous *chaebol*-centered, export-oriented economy that failed to make trickle-down effects and sustainable growth, and to improve the quality of life for the people. The income-led and inclusive growth policy is also adopted by the Moon regime in place of the previous mercantilist and neoliberal growth policy. These economic policies are geared to build a people-centric economy and a fair and equitable society, which are also backed by economic policies such as minimum wage increase, shorter working hours, regularization of irregular workers, welfare budget expansion, stabilization of real estate prices, job creation, improvement of income distribution, expansion of household income and consumption. But the recent poor performance shown by Korea's national economy has often stirred up blame for these policies. Criticisms claiming that the Moon regime has so far failed in managing macro-economic affairs, in revitalizing the economy through social policies, and in strengthening fair economy are mounting (Cho, 2018).

Recently, however, the Yoon, Suk-Yeol regime has been returning the Moon Jae-in government's policy back to the starting point. By mobilizing the master frame of freedom to support large corporations, support nuclear power industry, and decrease welfare support policies, etc., Korean society seems to be lost in absence of talking and consensus politics, but rather retreating to a strong government-dominated politics centered on prosecutors based on ideology and faction logic. Korea used to be characterized by a strong state and a weak civil society, with the underdeveloped latter repressed by the overdeveloped former. The state is still a dominant actor in organizing society from top down. Its vertical accountability over the people by public policy formation is not sufficiently established. There is no small political space for populist leaders to emerge to manipulate civil society.

At the same time, although the Moon Jae-In regime has tried to change class coalition from developmental alliance between the state and business to a post-developmental one between the state and working class, it has retained business to survive facing harsh international economic competition. More importantly, it has made wide use of populist rhetoric and appeal to mobilize mass support by connecting directly to the people. In the name of direct and participatory democracy, agitation and mobilization have often outweighed debates and participation. In particular, Moon regime does not hesitate to make use of populist mobilization in the name of getting rid of a deep-rooted evil.

In addition to the citizens groups and people's ones, there have emerged two extremely opposing political camps that are divided being for and against Moon's foreign and domestic policies. One of these groups is the pro-Moon group who unconditionally supports the Moon regime, and the other is the anti-Moon group who absolutely opposes the regime.[1] Not only anti-Moon group but pro-Moon group

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[1] During the candlelight protests against Park Geunhye regime in the years of 2016-2017, the so-called

enjoy making use of fake news, disinformation, and biased broadcasting as means of propaganda. The two groups have been confronting each other more in terms of political interests more than of ideological orientation. They tend to formulate confirmation bias leading to 'post-truth'. Populism is usually led by a maverick who seeks to maintain power on the basis of mass support.

The Korean case is somewhat distinctive in that the new political power group, including the "586 politicians" act as mavericks instead of President Moon Jae-In. They exploit nationalist populism[2] by constantly reimagining countries that are acceptable versus not; China is reinvented as a friendly nation, while Japan is framed as an enemy nation. Nationalism creates open doors for China, whereas closed doors for Japan. The United States, regarded as the most amiable country for the longest time, is looked upon as an imperial power responsible for the division of two Koreas. In particular, some political leaders from the 586 generation are not reluctant to name *Tochak-waegu* (autogenous pro-Japanese group) as old evils that include the present right-wing politicians. In this way, they try to agitate and mobilize the citizens to join the pro-Moon group to share a strong sense of cohesion and aggression.

V. Korean Citizens' Struggling for Empowerment since Early 2000s

A key feature of Korean social movements could be characterized as a strong civil society against a strong state. Under the master frame of democratization, Korean civil society made a dedicated effort to democratize the authoritarian dictatorship regime. As a result, it contributed to the procedural democracy of a direct presidential election system through the June uprising in 1987. Unfortunately, party politics has not been able to escape from the backwardness of boss politics or regional hegemony based on the three Kims'-DJ, YS, JP- leadership. While political party politics still cannot escape from the infant stage, the Korean civil or social movements have produced a so-called "over-socialization of social movements", which promotes national policy reform. Even within the civil society, rather than pursuing the public good, it often pursues its own interests by relying on a kind of 'swarming strategy' in which they pretend to argue for public interests.

Given these, the Korean society became the so-called "social movement society" in which people easily turn to direct action strategy rather than institutional politics as insider strategy. We believe that social movements should be an effective alternative when the institutional channel for social weak or minority is obstructed. However, if all members of society stick to collective action strategies, social distrust and conflicts will become even more prevalent. When contentious politics becomes more popular, state-society conflicts and its resulting costs are greatly increased.

Considering those strengths and weaknesses, we contend that civic empowerment would be the best possible solution to save democratic values and institutions in the face of populist challenges. Enlightened citizens could join together to form civic organizations based on mutual trust. The Korean case provides a new angle to this contemplation. It is the Moon regime that showed active populist mobilization. An examination of the Korean case shows that unless enlightened citizens join together, civil society cannot survive to exercise leverage towards two extremely antagonized political camps.

To activate civil society, Korea needs to strengthen interest politics among citizens. Unless social movement organizations aggregate complex interests among various social classes and groups, civil society is not capable of channeling them into the state to formulate them into a public policy. It is thus a good sign that businessmen, workers, farmers, the urban poor, teachers, pharmacists, doctors, and public servants have formed civil associations for promoting their respective interests. Yet civil associations have not been successful in developing institutional channels for mediating differences among them. Interest politics are still unarticulated, hyperbolic and unruly (Im, 2000: 23). For democracy to deepen, a robust civil society is required. Capitalism is possible in the absence of civil society, but democracy is

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Candlelight vigils (*chotbull)* were a mainstream of social movements, while the so-called National flag vigils (*taekeukki)* organized rallies against *chotbull*. It would be my understanding that the pro-Moon group grew out of *chotbull* and the anti-Moon group almost succeeded to *taekeukki*.

[2] This kind of neo-nationalism can be found either on the left the Scottish socialist Party Dutch Socialist Party or on the right Jean-Marie Le Pen's FN in France Jorg Haaider's FPO in Austria.

not possible without civil society (Fish, 1994: 41). The existence of civil society is a prerequisite not for the transition to but the deepening of democracy (Schmitter, 1995).

It would be interesting to look at how democracy in Korea has transformed since the regime change after the so-called "candlelight citizens' revolution." As the space of civil society has shrunk in the rest of the world, Korea's did the opposite. One could call the candlelight protests a people's revolution, oriented towards an empowered democracy. Looking back, the student revolution on April 19, 1960, contained the aspirations for freedom and equality, the June People's Struggle of 1987 signified the overturning of authoritarianism for democracy, and the candlelight protests could be seen as a continuation of such protests; it was indeed the people's revolution which carried Korea from a democracy to a completed republic. The candlelight protests held a particular significance for democracy; beyond a simple procedural democracy attained in the old democratization process in which leaders are elected by a vote, citizens called for political participation and civil engagement.

In the five months following October 2016, nearly fourteen million Korean citizens participated in voluntary struggles dotted across the nation and demonstrated that the power of the people is growing. The notion that such a large-scale protest, incomparable to the recent 'Sunflower Student Movement' in Taiwan or 'Rainbow Revolution' in Hong Kong, could go on to be non-violent, peaceful, and without causing a single casualty, is grounds for positivity. The candlelight protests have special significance in this era in where civil society is atrophying globally, regardless of a country's status as developed or underdeveloped. By carrying not rocks and Molotov cocktails but 'paper stones' and opening a street parliament, citizens decried the president's infringement of the constitution and state monopoly and called out for the exposure and cessation of the epidemic evils and abuses holding up the privileged classes.

In this explosion of civil society where citizens gathered in public squares, presenting and discussing in the name of sharing, sympathy, and coexistence, citizens illustrated the possibility of a type of heterarchy which combines representative democracy and direct democracy, participatory democracy, and deliberative democracy. By questioning what a country is from the perspective of the citizens, Korea's civil society was able to ruminate on the meaning of a democratic republic. Together, they contemplated the second clause of the first article of the Korean constitution: "The sovereignty of the Republic of Korea shall reside in the people, and all state authority shall emanate from the people." It became a catalyst for socially problematizing the numerous political challenges that Korea faced. Citizens were more than scattered grains of sand that coalesced on social networking services, where they exchanged thoughts and gathered public opinion, but they were a multitude, comprised of distinct collectives of varied identities. In the candlelight protests, this concentration of citizens regardless of generation, class, gender, or region, expressed a latent resistance to globalization abroad, and to polarization within. The candlelight protests awakened us to the importance of an empowered democracy, that is, civic engagement, where the practical institutionalization of democracy ensures sovereignty that is vested in the people. The ideals of freedom and equality are realized through the expansion of social rights (civil rights) and economic provisions (welfare). We must now consider an alternative that can overcome a representative democracy. But if we do not begin the process of institutionalizing the direct, participatory democracy that we saw gathering in public squares, it might end up heading towards a dinocracy (Kim & Lim, 2019: 27-28).

This paper suggests a tripartite relationship model for promoting democratic citizenship in the pandemic era. Jan Scholte argued that a trilateral model of public participation, education, and debate can contribute to promoting citizens' consensus and engagement in democratization process (Scholte 2003). Throughout the pandemic hardship, citizens have been excluded or marginalized in the decision-making process from actively responding to the pandemic. Their citizenship itself can become distorted or unbalanced. If Korean citizens' involvement disappears from the decision-making process, their consensus with government policy would diminish and civil society itself will shrink (Lim & Kong 2020). For instance, in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Korean government policy focused on public participation simply to get citizens' compliance rather than expanding public

education and debate to get their consensus. The resulting response was praised by the media worldwide as effective, which elicited pride and patience among Koreans. However, the government's response was not able to resolve the crucial issues of Korean nationals' hatred of, as well as stigma and discrimination against, socially vulnerable groups in Korea, Korean society's serious economic inequalities, or protecting social minorities' right to life.

It is high time that democratic citizenship should be revitalized. It is very important to evaluate the K-quarantine model with reference to civic engagement—that is, democratic citizenship—by focusing on three key mechanisms: public education, debate, and participation. These key factors can contribute to forms of civic engagement in which citizens are included in the process of tackling the pandemic, at the same time as improving the cognitive process (learning), deliberation process (debating), and participation process (collaborating) during the pandemic era. Such engagement and exercising of democratic citizenship can facilitate mutual recognition and communication, and improve trust and solidarity among citizens (Kong & Lim 2020). While responding to COVID-19, many Korean citizens have been marginalized in terms of their engagement in public health governance, resulting in a democratic deficit and instead, the return of a strong state (Kim 2013). By only emphasizing controlling the spread of infection, the government neglected the human rights of minorities, who were instead left to struggle with discrimination, exclusion, hatred, and stigmatization. People have not paid much attention to exclusion, segregation, and selfishness due to class, gender, nationality, age, etc.

The neoliberal world economic system has built a transnationally connected society that can connect world easily and closely at an unimaginable speed, scale, and scope thanks to digital revolution. Civil society faces new challenge, that is, control and surveillance by an invisible algorithm, while expecting to build a transnational network through the digital revolution. Globally, social inequality and polarization, populism, racial and tribal conflicts are increasing, fake news and hatred are prevalent, and human rights violations of the socially disadvantaged and minorities are deepening.

While online activities have expanded during the pandemic, many people have difficulty distinguishing factual information from fake news due to the flood of information on social media. Sympathizing with self-affirming claims concerning public assistance, the emergency disaster relief funds, what constitutes a good landlord during the pandemic-induced economic downturn, the extent of digital surveillance, and gig laborers and fall into fierce diatribes rather than deeply understanding the issues on the basis of facts and carefully persuading others so as to develop a consensus. In the pandemic era, the government emphasized the K-quarantine model as a master frame, pushing aside other crucial issues such as safety, life, individual freedom, privacy, and the welfare of social minorities. Likewise, some local governments heavily biased towards local development have also favored local interest groups, and ambitiously tried to control individual freedoms by mobilizing digital surveillance systems. Minorities have become more vulnerable to such panopticon-like digital surveillance initiatives while at the same time excluded from full access to the public health system. We argue that without democratic citizenship, the K-quarantine model is not sustainable and will drive such compliance of citizens into their increasing resistance. Given these problems, we must revisit and reflect on the K-quarantine model in a critical way with reference to democratic citizenship.

V. Conclusion

Globalization has given Korea a chance to upgrade its position in the international political and economic system. It has joined the so-called 30-50 club as the seventh member, following the USA, Germany, Japan, England, France, and Italy. In the process of globalization, however, it has not been an easy task for Korea to achieve economic advancement and political development, simultaneously. Korea has continued to face how to make democratic coalition among different classes and groups to extend the social and economic citizenship in addition to political citizenship. Its experience shows the possibilities and difficulties of democratic progress in the process of globalization. We would like to emphasize the increasing chasm between the minority of elite and the majority of people. Korea is not an exception: it has experienced the polarization of life, consciousness, and culture as a result of growing

economic inequality and social disparity. It is a hurdle that will be difficult to overcome through the one-dimensional consideration of conservatism and progressivism. Elections centered on political parties are fading away. Armed with sites like Twitter, Kakao, Instagram, and Facebook, active citizens form public opinion centered on candidates they support through social media and wield influence in the public sphere far exceeding that of party organizations.

The reason that Korean democracy has not matured enough to reach liberal democracy over the 20 years since democratization may be found in the dearth of culture of social dialogue, comprised of discussion, bargaining, and concertation. We believe that the introduction of governance based on civic participation through deliberation should be strongly needed, not only because the agora democracy supplemented the lack of accountability of a representative democracy and brought us closer to direct democracy than before, but also because it can end in Balkanized dinocracy that appeals to emotions rather than concentrating on distinguishing what is right and wrong. Populism as a 'thin-centered ideology' (Mudde, 2004) tends to make use of polarization strategy of dividing the good people and the bad elite. It provokes culture war as a result of political polarization. Populist leaders both promote and benefit from polarization strategy, before and after they rise to power. This polarization strategy they manufacture is less of an 'ideological polarization' than intense political interests based on moral dichotomy. Regardless of the ruling or opposing political forces, populist leaders accuse the established elite of impoverishing the people in the name of the 'general will'.

In Korea, there has been a great division of civil society between progressive and conservative groups along generation, gender, and ideological orientation. The younger generation tends to support the Moon regime's social and economic policies while the older generation stands opposed. However, in the 2021 April Majors' by-election in Seoul and Pusan, young women continued to support the ruling party candidates, while young men stopped backing them. A severe rift among the younger generation has appeared regarding Moon regime's social and economic policies. Recently, the Yoon regime seems to go back to the old authoritarian era. We are now living in the new era of the 4th industrial revolution coupled with post-modernism. As the candlelight revolution has proven, people's power has become decisive in that more participation and inclusion are urged. Korea is now at the critical turning point, probably for the most important time in its modern history. The choice is up to enlightened citizens themselves where civic empowerment would make all the difference.

In addition, the K-quarantine model throughout the pandemic involves learning collectively that a sustainable strategy for the next pandemic should be based on citizen consensus. For such a strategy, the government will be responsible for providing not only more accurate and transparent information, but also a more transparent and open public sphere in which people discuss with each other freely to come to an agreement about how to respond to the pandemic in the future. We also learned that the government responding to a pandemic through a system of control and monitoring from above has only limited results. At the same time, citizens should take a more responsible approach of supporting public health in a pandemic situation, so as to ensure that no one is excluded or alienated from the right to health. People should continually learn and discuss with each other, actively participating in the implementation process, so that everyone is guaranteed the right to health.

People must also urgently look around themselves at who their neighbors and communities are. Many are temporary contract workers, platform workers, the elderly in need of care, children, women, migrant workers, and people with disabilities—all of whom must not be marginalized. So far, we have only reflected on a small portion of the unequal and unjust social impacts of the pandemic and K-quarantine model. It is neither justified nor valid to make individuals responsible for restoring normal life. Ultimately, we must strive to restore democratic local communities. More challenges are coming for Korean civil society in enriching democracy under the new threats of digitally invisible surveillance and control.

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