The Influence of the Internet on Politics
(Comparative Case Study in China, Japan, Korea, and Indonesia)

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Abstract

The Internet is a necessity for people around the world including Asia. It is a means to connect politicians, political party supporters, activists, and the parties themselves. The advent of Internet cafes and email has greatly enabled the integration of global communication. At the same time, the emerging cyber culture of the Internet challenges the very notions of sovereignty, government, political parties, civil society, and conventional politics in China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The political context of Internet usage differs throughout the Asia-Pacific region, but certain concerns are common to the role the Internet plays in the region. Will the Internet create a political culture that undermines conventional politics? And will Internet usage in Asia result in the creating of local cultural content, strengthen regional diversity and enhance political maturity? To answer the questions, the paper will present some cases of the Internet's impact to politics in China, Indonesia, Japan, and South Korea. Then, the paper will describe some of the similarities between the cases. Finally it will conclude with some conceptual ideas as to what Indonesia can learn about Internet-based politics from these cases.

Introduction

The Internet is a necessity for people around the world including Asia. It is a means to connect politicians, political party supporters, activists, and the parties themselves. Schroeder (2004) has said:
The Internet has changed the way people communicate and now is in the process of changing political and advertising campaigns. A Stanford University study found that the more years people have been using Internet, the more they spend hours on the Internet, and political communication expert are starting to grasp it" (pp. 28-29).

Additionally, the Internet is a pubic space where people go to read and express their political opinions. The number of political website and blogs grow daily. Google.com search results return more than 189.000 for

humorous political website and 310.000 for political website (Ragusa, 2004)

The Internet is becoming the dominant and preferred method of communication in Asia. This poses new and unforeseen threats and opportunities throughout the Asia -Pacific region. The advent of Internet cafes and email has greatly enabled the integration of global communication. At the same time, the emerging cyber culture of the Internet challenges the very notions of sovereignty, government, political parties, civil society, and conventional politics in China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

There is extensive discourse in Asia about the role of the Internet, who should and can control it, and its cultural, political and economic impact. In China, the government seeks to control the Internet and related e-mail services to prevent public access to sensitive cultural and political information in order to prevent civil society from developing challenges to the one party state. In Indonesia, the Internet cafes are fast replacing the convention of discussing politics and reading aloud from newspapers in urban coffee shops. In Japan, a much more politically open society, the government and its political party have their own definition for allowable usage of the Internet. In South Korea, the Internet could and did have an impact on politics. The political context of Internet usage differs throughout the Asia-Pacific region, but certain concerns are common to the role the Internet plays in the region. Will the Internet create a political culture that undermines conventional politics? And will Internet usage in Asia result in the creating of local cultural content, strengthen regional diversity and enhance political maturity?

To answer the questions above, I will present some cases of the Internet's impact to politics in China, Indonesia, Japan, and South Korea. Then, I will describe some of the similarities between the cases. Finally I will conclude my paper with some conceptual ideas as to what Indonesia can learn about Internet-based politics from these cases.

Censorship and Propaganda in China

China established Internet access officially in 1994. There were only 10,000 Internet users at that time (Yang, 2003). Since then, Internet access has expanded considerably in China over the past years. According to official statistics, the number of Internet users rose to 79.5 million by December 2003 from 59.1 million users in December 2002 ("Behind," 2004). China Today showed that there were 87 million of Internet users in early December 2004, the second largest number in the world (Epstein, 2004).

This number has presented the authorities with greater challenges in their attempts to censor and control the online activities of Internet users. The Chinese Government through The Chinese Communist Party employs a number of approaches to control the Internet, from introducing numerous regulations to encouraging self-censorship, with some success (Shie, 2004). A report in June 2001 from Chinaonline.com said that "Internet regulations come from Beijing, but each province has a significant amount of control, and authorities in each city also have some local autonomy. Consequently, in different places, there is great variation in policies, regulations, services, and prices" (China Online, 2001). Over the past year, there has been a growing trend towards assigning greater responsibilities of surveillance and monitoring to a variety of Internet companies in China such as Internet Cafes, Information Service Providers (ISPs) and other enterprises. The government has built what is known as "The Great Firewall of China" with the help of foreign company, Cisco system, a United States-based company. Cisco designed a router device, integrator, and firewall box specifically tailored to the People's of Republic China's telecommunication system

to block viruses and hackers on a national scale (Gutmann, 2002).

In China, the Internet is state-owned and operated. The Internet is believed to serve as a political vehicle for the Chinese government. In 1999 the Chinese Communist Party launched a "government online project (*zhengfushangwang*) that aimed that by the end of 2000, 80 percent of its departments had to be online (Zhang, 2001). By now, most of the departments are online with sites that are sponsored by Microsoft, IBM and Legend (de Kloet, 2002). As Jiang Zemin, former head of the Chinese Communist Party, said that "the speed and scope of (information flows) have created a borderless information space around the world…the melding of the traditional economy and information technology will provide the engine for the development of the economy and society in 21st century" (Kalathil, 2003). The government then improved many civil services which formerly would have been very time-consuming or near impossible for many citizen to access via Internet. It is expected that all of the PRC's central authorities, provinces, municipalities, autonomous regions, and embassies in foreign countries will be connected to the Internet and offer websites by 2010 (Shie, 2004).

With the introduction of "Government Online," the Party hopes to lessen the tension between the populace and the authorities by allowing cybercitizens (in a limited form) to air their grievances (Zhang, 2001). The government also has provided some possibilities for channeling opinions expressed by Chinese users in the Internet. The installation of a discussion forum on the homepage of the *People's Daily* can not be interpreted merely as an effort to monitor public opinion, rather also as an attempt to allow public opinion to be conveyed in a mild form. For some intellectuals certain gestures, like that of the State Development Planning Commission seeking suggestions on state development plans from its "Online Forum," are encouraging (Zhang, 2001). Another

improvement is the introduction of a mailbox for different municipal governments with cybercitizens, as well as polls in various official websites seeking to collect the opinions and suggestions of Internet users. Notions such as increased transparency and democracy may merely serve as ideological veils; the pro-active role of the Chinese nation-state when it comes to the Internet might be considered as yet another performative attempt to legitimize its power (Zhang, 2001). Most interesting here is the belief in and importance attached to the Internet that is reflected in such a policy, a belief that also comes back in the following statement of an official: "We in the government think we missed a lot of the industrial revolution. And we don't want to miss the digital revolution!" (Hachigian, 2001). This means that technology links up with the project of the nation-state, but now the railways and assembly lines are replaced by bits and bytes (de Kloet, 2002). In addition, Yang (2003) has said that the Internet has become part of an important new era in China's civil society development. In a recent Internet survey, 42 percent of respondents said that they see the Internet as an aid to China's political democratization process (China Today, 2004). All levels of government uses the Internet to facilitate transparency; it allows public supervision of governmental projects, registration of cases, trials and executions.

Alongside its e-government program, the Chinese government is strengthening its uses of the Internet to distribute propaganda and engage in thought work. These practices, long crucial to the effective functioning of China's communist regime, have been adapted to the information age, primarily through the use of web sites that present a new and often more subtle rendering of the government's perspective (Kalathil & Boas, 2003). The government has set up specific web sites to publish its perspective on current events. This is especially relevant when the government claims that "misinformation" is being disseminated by opposing groups, as

in the case of the Falun Gong. Various reports in English and Chinese feature give testimonials from "reeducated" Falun Gong practitioners, photographs of self-immolating protestors in Tiananmen Square. More subtly the People's Daily maintain a strong web presence that is significantly livelier that its stodgy print counterpart. It offers an increasing mix of sports and lifestyle news, coupled with a popular, nationalistically themed chat room that competes with those run by private companies (Kalathil & Boas, 2003). The online English version of the People's Daily, designed to present a modern face to the rest of world, features news as well as links to government white papers, the selected works of Deng Xiaoping, and the Chinese constitution. All these measures fit neatly into the government's plan to build a large coordinated online propaganda system. The State Council Information Office has established an Internet Propaganda Administrative Bureau, responsible for "guiding and coordinating" web news content, while chief Ding Guangen has directed major state media organs to use the Internet fully (Kalathil & Boas, 2003).

In addition to distributing propaganda on the Internet global, the government is reviving the idea of a national intranet, which is intended to substitute for the global Internet by providing online services paired with acceptable content (whose exact nature has yet to be detailed) for the Chinese citizen (Zhang, 2001). Called CNet, the planned intranet is characterized as a proprietary communication and data network that will feature better security and "homegrown technology." Although such ideas have been discussed and deferred for a number of years, their perpetual revival as a national priority demonstrates the state's continued determination to address the infiltration of foreign ideas (Zhang, 2001).

In general, Internet use in the political sphere has proved to be a net benefit for the Chinese government. Increasingly sophisticated e-government measures are geared toward service provision, which helps to increase citizen satisfaction with the government and perhaps to provide a form of legitimacy that somewhat, replaces the representative process. Reform-minded officials are pushing the use of the Government Online project as a tool to flatten and streamline China's government structure, as well as to reform governance itself. Propaganda organs are benefiting from Internet use, helping the government to reach a new, younger audience (Kalathil & Boas, 2003).

Underground and Civil Society in Indonesia

Indonesia became connected to the global Internet in 1994, as a result of pioneering efforts by the academic and research community (ITU, 2002). By the end of 1995, there were 16 ISPs, 20,000 users and 640 Kbps of international internet connectivity. For the year ending 2000 there were an estimated 400,000 Internet dial-up subscribers translating to roughly two million users, or just under one percent of the population (Creed, 2001). Official APJII (Indonesia Internet Service Provider Association)'s estimate of the number of subscribers and internet users by the end of year 2005 is 1,500,000 subscribers with around 16 million of users (APJII, 2005).

The Internet which came to Indonesia during the early phase of the political crisis in the 1990s emerged as an alternative form of media that is no longer under state control (Lim, 2003). According to Lim (2003), the Internet came in contact with the concept of "society" that in turn used and transformed this technology in unique ways. The Internet has accordingly been developing in Indonesia with its own unique practices and characteristics, transformed by localized power structures related to the three spheres in society, namely, the state, the corporate economy, and civil society.

Before the collapse of Suharto's New Order government, the state was a very dominant actor that owned all public services in order to keep capital in its orbit, including Telecom and Indosat, both telecommunication companies. These companies had the licenses for supplying Internet access. After changes of government, in 2004, the government through the companies it owned still tried to maintain a near monopoly hold over the Internet access and its attendant commerce. Telecom is still owned by the government while Indosat underwent privatization with 42 percent of the shares held by ST Telemedia Singapore and 58 percents held by the Indonesian government (Laksamana, 2004). Telecom is the only a dominant player in non-dial-up-service for the Internet and Indosat is the only company that provides the international connection making it the portal for reaching the global Internet (Lim, 2003). This means that all Internet service providers need Indosat to connect to the Internet global. In addition, the government also regulates the monopolies of the telecommunication industry (Lim, 2003).

In this point the Internet is still believed to serve as a political vehicle for the Indonesian government (de Kloet, 2002). Although the government does not block Internet sites, it gains economic benefit from the users and Internet service providers through increasing the cost of Internet access by increasing local telephone fees. The government increase local telephone fees by 28.21 percent in March 2004. The Internet access fee for the Internet service providers is US $1.07 in addition to an access fee and 10 percent tax (US $1 = 9, 265 IDR). It directly depresses the market for local Internet service providers because they cannot compete with Telecom service providers (Tempo, 2004). The users can access the Internet from TelkomNet Instan provided by Telecom via telephone line at the same price but without having to pay access fees and tax. The additional cost for obtaining Internet access helps to maintain the government's

power (Lim, 2003). At the same time the government does not allow foreign Internet service providers to operate in Indonesia (Chip-Online, 2005).

However, the civil society is not so easily manipulated with these rules of usage and Internet access fees. Civil society is still aware of its rights and sees that the Internet makes global–local direct contact possible, thus making information available from abroad that was previously not accessible in Indonesia. This has undermined not only the ability but also the legitimacy of the state to control access to information. When citizens are made aware through the Internet of all sorts of alternative sources of information other wise not available no danger to their well-being, the idea of allowing the state to control the Internet is rejected, either overtly by public acts of resistance or covertly through underground information networks using the Internet with expensive access fee.

The famous mailing list, *Apakabar*, was a perfect example. Started by an American, John McDougall, *Apakabar* forwarded Indonesian-related news articles to its subscribers all over the world. Most of the information it obtained was not available within Indonesia because it was controversial and critical of the Indonesian New Order regime. As it developed, it became one of the main sources for uncensored news and discussion on Indonesia (Lim, 2003). In 1996–1998, this list became a major irritant for the army and the Department of Information, and helped to establish the Internet's reputation as a radically free medium (Hill and Sen, 1997).

To provide low-cost or affordable Internet access for society, Purbo and Computer Network Research Group (CNRG) created and labeled their movement as a "guerilla movement". By utilizing Japanese satellite, Purbo and CNRG connected with a global actor (Japan Corporation Satellite and WIDE Japan) which had a global project (the Asian Internet Initiative Project) to create a mass base for the Internet (Lim, 2003). It

provided opportunities for civil society to circumvent media access rules imposed by the government.

The rise of civil society supported by the Internet successfully overthrew Suharto. The efforts of civil society did not end with the demise of Suharto's regime; they continued and re-emerged through the everyday practices of civil society in the post-Suharto era. It keeps struggling to gain the power to create alternative spaces for identity and civic life outside of, and often against, the agenda of the state and of business (Hill & Sen, 2002).

In 1997 elections had provided the three legal parties with an opportunity to test the campaign value of having an Internet site. The move was led by the Muslim-oriented PPP (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, Development Unity Party) which launched its site, www.ppp.or.id on the 25th of April 1997, declaring in its 'editorial' that it aimed to provide a means of rapid, economical party communication to disseminate information about activities and party views, in a manner not possible via its monthly print publication which circulated mainly to party functionaries. By May both Golkar (www.golkar.co.id and www.indocon.com/golkar) as a ruling government's party and the PDI (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*, Indonesian Democracy Party) (www.banteng.org) as minority party had followed suit. The Internet was seen by some commentators as offering the PPP and the PDI (which did not even have a regular print periodical) a means of campaign communication which was not regulated by the government, unlike radio, television and print media for which the minister of information had set a campaign protocol (Hill, 2003).

Two years later the political tableau was more complex. Only a minority of the forty-eight parties contesting the 1999 elections had their own web sites; most were not interactive, providing mainly static information. The National Mandate Party (PAN, *Partai Amanat Nasional*), with its strong appeal to middle-class university-educated voters, was quick to launch its web site (www.amanat.org) in August 1998, barely one day after its formal establishment, featuring a photograph of founder Amien Rais, and bilingual (English and Indonesian) sub-pages. By March 1999 as the campaign heated up, the party claimed around 3,000 visitors per day, but the slow and broken transmission, and a string of programming glitches proved a turn-off for netters (Pareanom *et al*.1999). It was a common problem for party web sites. The web site of the transformed PDI, now known as *PDI-Perjuangan* (The Indonesian Democracy Party of Struggle) (www.megawati.forpresident.com), was described as attractive, but rather slow to access because of an excess of content. As journalists from *Tempo* magazine discovered, this was still better than the PKB [National Awakening Party, *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*] site (www.pkb.org) which for the previous few days had been stalled (Pareanom, Yusi, Setiawan, & Arjanto, 1999). However the Internet was used by Jakarta politicians, at least anecdotally, to monitor the coverage given to them by both the Indonesian and international media (Hill, 2003) To some extent the battle for political attention was an international one, with figures like presidential aspirant Amien Rais keen to follow the nuance of such media attention, and the web providing a rapid method for this (Hill, 2003).

In 2004, when Indonesia had a direct presidential election for the first time; the Internet also becomes part of the campaigning process to build positive images of the presidential candidates. Haque (2005) said that the two of five president candidates who passed to the second round developed their own websites to attract potential voters. The elected president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, successfully used his campaign websites to crystallize of his positive image among Internet users. This is because 40% of

Indonesian population is young people and educated people (Haque, 2005). Most of them wanted to see change in Indonesia. Although the number of Indonesian Internet users was only 8% of the total population the Internet became a tool that played a decisive role in affecting Indonesian public opinion (Haque, 2005).

All of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's sites were developed by Bloracenter.net, at which the presidential candidate and his followers gathered, edited, created, and published relevant information. After he became president, Bloracenter.net became an information center for him to meet with his supporters and voters by direct meeting or teleconference. On February 25, 2005, Bloracenter.net, the official website of the new president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, announced that the site would be providing internal information about the activities of his government cabinets in "Tabloid Kabinet – Cabinet Tabloid". This e-journal would provide positive or negative critiques to members of his government cabinets. According to the site, the tabloid aims to develop the quality of work of any the ministries to increase accountability to the public (Bloracenter, 2005).

Regulation and Political Party Competition in Japan

At first time, In Japan, the use of the Internet was a bottom-up process, initiated by a small group of academics with virtually no government support, and spreading in a largely unplanned and spontaneous way. Japan has lagged behind the US and other industrialized countries in adopting the Internet (Rimmer and Morris-Suzuki, 1999). However, Japan has been catching up in developing the Internet presence. The growth of Internet usage in Japan has accelerated since the early 1990s. In July 1993, Japan established the first Internet Service Provider-Internet Initiative Japan (MPT, 1997). In 1995, more than fifty companies started to offer Internet connection services on a commercial basis. The number of host computers in Japan directly connected to the global Internet was doubling every 12 months, showing the same rapid growth patterns as elsewhere in the world (Aizu, 1995). In August 1995, the Internet Society announced the latest results of its regular host count survey. The number of host computers connected to the Internet in Japan was close to 150,000. In two years, Japan had experienced a growth rate of 420% (Aizu, 1995). In 2002, the number of Internet users in Japan stood at 57.2 million (ITU, 2004) or about 45% of population. This represents a growth of 141.55% from 1998 to 2002 (Kiko-Net, 2004). More recently, the number of Internet users in Japan has reached 77 million people (Otake, 2004).

The political implications of Internet usage began with the protest movement over the presence of US bases in Okinawa (Rimmer and Morris-Suzuki, 1999). The Internet played an important part of the campaign to reduce the US military presence in the Okinawa prefecture. The local government conducted an electronic referendum, which allowed people from all over Japan and the world to express their views on the subject via the Internet. Though there was no legal force to remove US bases from Okinawan prefecture, the Internet provided an innovative way of encouraging outside interest in the Okinawa issue (Okinawa Prefecture, 2004).

The second case involving the political impact of the Internet concerned the indigenous Ainu people of northern Japan. The issues were the demand for a new Ainu law to replace the repressive 19th-century "protection" legislation which was still on the statute book; and the protest movement against the Nibutani Dam in Southern Hokkaido (Rimmer and Morris-Suzuki, 1999). Supporters of the Ainu protest movement used the Internet as a means of disseminating information about the progress of the courts case. At the beginning of 1997, the Internet was also used to gather over 700 signatures on a petition against the Nibutani Dam, which was submitted to Prime

Minister Hashimoto (Rimmer and Morris-Suzuki, 1999). As a result of this effort, in 1997, the government replaced the old protection legislation with the Ainu Cultural Promotion Law (FPCJ, 1997), which provides a measure of government support for the maintenance of the Ainu language and culture. The court also ruled that the Ministry of Construction had failed to recognize the legitimate cultural rights of the Ainu people as indigenous inhabitants of the Nibutani region. Unfortunately, the dam was complete and the order for the destruction of the dam or the return of the land failed. In this case the Internet became a network for grass-roots political action with certain limitations (Rimmer and Morris-Suzuki, 1999)

At the same time, political parties in Japan exploited the Internet as a new means of communication. Prior to the July 1995 Upper House election approximately 40 Japanese politicians constructed campaign websites, a relative high number compared with other countries holding elections around this time (Davis, 1999). The first website for a political party that went online was that of the Socialist Democratic Party (SDP) in June 1995, with other parties following shortly thereafter. The parties focused on press releases, party platforms and lists of candidates, and constituencies (Tkach-Kawasaki, 2003).

However, the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs and Posts and Communications threatened to make the sites illegal under the media provisions of the Public Offices Elections Law (POEL) (Mori, 2004). Personal and party political Web Pages, it was suggested, contained "text and images" that constituted political advertising and were viewable by an "unspecified number of people" during an official campaign activities period (Otake, 2004). The ministry warned of potential infringements of Section 142 of the POEL. As a result, a number of candidates voluntarily removed their websites, and parties refrained from updating certain portions of their sites during the official campaign activities period or removed their lists of candidates and constituencies (Tkach-Kawasaki, 2003).

Shortly before the next general election in October 1996, the issue of political websites was addressed by the opposition parties. In early October 1996, the now-defunct New Party Sakigake submitted an inquiry to the government asking for clarification regarding the use of websites during election campaigns. In the inquiry, the party noted that the use of websites actually upheld the original intent of Section 142 by providing an inexpensive means of political communication with the electorate; the party also pointed out that the information in such websites could benefit Japanese voters residing overseas (Tkach-Kawasaki, 2003). However, the Ministry insisted that controlling the number of campaign documents a candidate releases—and banning distribution of video clips or e-mails once the campaign period kicks off—would ensure equal opportunity for all candidates, regardless of their financial resources (Otake, 2004). The Ministry also indicated that any updates made by political parties or candidates to their websites during the official campaign activities period would be regarded as infringing on the POEL (Tkach-Kawasaki, 2003).

Since 1996, a number of formal and informal initiatives have been taken by opposition parties regarding the "appropriate" political use of the Internet. In the spring of 1997, the DPJ convened a study group composed of nine young representatives from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Shinshinto, and Democratic Party of Japan (DJP) parties to discuss how the Internet could be used for political activities that included providing information for Japanese voters residing overseas and determining the appropriate candidate information that should be posted on websites (Tkach-Kawasaki, 2003). These efforts culminated in submission of a proposed amendment by the DPJ to the Lower House on 16 June 1998, a month prior

to the 1998 Upper House election, to reform the POEL and allow websites to be used for election campaign activites. The proposal, however, was not acted upon (Tkach-Kawasaki, 2003).

Though the issue of campaign website has remained uncertainty and the government has also continued to threaten legal action for updating websites during election periods, the incentives for both government and opposition parties to use the Web have been increasing. During 2000-2001, the political parties and politicians took advantage of uncertainty situation to incorporate the Internet into their campaign communication strategies. In February 2000, the DPJ leader Hatoyama Yukio promoted the use of the Internet in a magazine interview, noting that websites and email could engage the electorate in direct dialogue with politicians (Netbrain at Tkach-Kawasaki, 2003). Late in March 2000, former LDP Prime Minister Mori personally urged LDP politicians and candidates to establish websites in preparation for the upcoming Lower House election.

In November 2000 the LDP faction leader Kato Koichi, spurred on by support received through his website, attempted to unseat former Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro as party leader. Although the attempt failed, Koichi's experience prompted the LDP to see that the Internet was more than simply another tool for election campaigning (Tkach-Kawasaki, 2003). Hiroshi Miura and Yuji Tamura said in *The Japanese Times Online* that in future elections, with the power of Internet, younger generations will begin to incorporate the use of the Internet in their daily activities especially considering the already existing strong mobile phone culture. They will start using it to check for real-time information on candidates and last-minute changes to their campaign schedules. It will make lawmakers realize the power of the Internet and try to use it more strategically (Otake, 2004).

In the spring of 2001, Prime Minister Koizumi made extensive use of his website to build support within the LDP, and went on to win the party's internal leadership race. Flushed by this success, in late May 2001 the Prime Minister started distributing a weekly email newsletter through the official Prime Minister's Office website that quickly proved highly popular, garnering a subscription base of two million within two months of its inception (Tkach-Kawasaki, 2003).

Rohsamo and Internet President in Korea

South Korea has established a world-class information and communication infrastructure in a joint effort between government and private sector. At the end of 2003, 11.18 million households—more than 73% of the total number of households—subscribed to broadband Internet and 29.22 million people—66% of the total population—had access to the Internet (Chin, 2004).

South Korea is an example of a country where Internet technology is being put to the uses that experts once predicted so optimistically for the world. South Korea is also an exemplary country to see the impact of Internet on politics because her unique features in both technology and politics. First, with the help of aggressive government information telecommunication policies, Korea has become technologically the most advanced country in Internet usage. Korea is the leading country in the world in the use of broadband access to the Internet. Second, South Korea is a relatively young democracy. After three decades of military dictatorship, it was only 10 years ago that Koreans had their first civilian President by a democratic election. Perhaps for this reason the impact that the media has on political processes may be greater and more clearly demonstrable in a democratically young country such as Korea (Kim, Moon, and Yang, 2004).

A result of the unique combination of the country is characteristics as a young democracy and the explicit government policy regarding broadband Internet access, the Internet played a critical role in the Korean Presidential Election of 2002. The supporters

of Roh Moo-hyun and in particular members of the "Rohsamo"—an acronym for "Roh Moo-hyun Lovers Group" leveraged the many-to-many communication capabilities of the Internet to disseminate and critically discuss political information. The Internet and widespread broadband penetration made it possible for a large number of voters to seek alternative view and political information unfiltered by the mass media. As a result, Roh Moo-hyun became president against all odds, and became known in the popular press as the first "Internet President" (Watts, 2003).

At first, the Rohsamo did not set out to make Roh Moo-hyun president of South Korea. It was simply a fan club for people disillusioned with the political process in Korea. People joined the club because they identified with Roh Moo-hyun's new political vision for a participatory democracy beyond regional divisions that left a rift in South Korea politics (Kim, Moon, and Yang, 2004). Rohsamo's goals shifted as the membership changed throughout the two years leading up to the presidential election. During March of 2002, over 1.000 new members registered on the Rohsamo site each day. Membership increased dramatically from just 5,000 to 83,088 registered members distributed worldwide in over 35 countries on five continents, forming a transnational advocacy network (Kim, Moon, and Yang, 2004). While Rohsamo is an online community with members distributed worldwide, local Rohsamo meetings were held frequently. From the beginning, members of Rohsamo met face-to-face in addition to exchanging political information and opinions online. Regional groups set up their own forums in online spaces in order to coordinate local activities that were not of immediate relevance to the entire community.

Rohsamo played a key role in critical moments throughout Roh Moo-hyun's road to presidency. Members wrote and sent handwritten letters supporting Roh and coordinated campaign fundraising activities both online and offline when internal friction within Roh's party threatened the financial viability of his continued candidacy, managing to raise approximately $700,000 in seven days (Kim, Moon, and Young, 2004). Overseas members who could not vote themselves produced pamphlets of evocative and emotionally stirring personal testimonials supporting Roh Moo-hyun. Members coordinated to disseminate these pamphlets to travelers en route to Seoul in airport throughout Europe in order to persuade potential undecided voters to vote for Roh. When real time polls on the day of the election indicated that he was trailing candidate Lee Hoi-chang, Rohsamo members sent text messages to mobilize the Roh supporters to vote (Kim, Moon, and Yang, 2004).
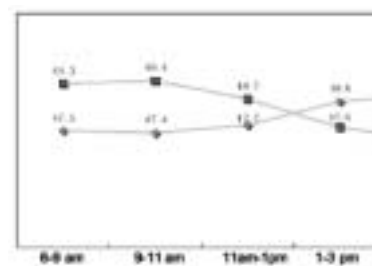

Figure 1. Candidate support by time of day (Source: KBS Media Research Exit Polls, adapted from Kim, Moon and Yang, 2004)

Discussion

Through these four case studies, we may see that the Internet plays an important role in politics. In East Asia, China, Japan, and Korea were each unique in the ways that Internet played a key role in politics. We may see that the percentage of Internet penetration and the number of Internet users increased significantly. While in South East Asia, Although Indonesia has a far lower percentage of Internet penetration and number of Internet users compared with China, Japan, and Korea, there are some similarities in how the Internet was influenced politics either in government or at the civil society level.

In comparing China and Indonesia, both states have maintained that the Internet

should be controlled by the government. We can see that although both did undergo privatization in their telecommunication industries, the Internet remained as a part of government's political vehicle (de Kleot, 1999). The Chinese government does make many efforts things to control the Internet. For instance, censorship with its "Great Fire Wall" (Fackler, 2002); it has forced Internet cafes to close down; it has banned more than 100 sites that promote democracy (Amnesty, 2002); and has arrested cyber-activists (Chou, 2004). All of these solutions were known as low tech solution for high tech problem and high tech solution for high tech problem (Chase & Mulvenon, 2002). In Indonesia, the government tries to control the Internet by increasing the cost of telephone taxes. This will directly affect Internet connection fee because most Internet connections use the dial-up system (Chip-Online, 2005). The government also owns the two telecommunication companies, Telecom and Indosat, which have a license to provide Internet access for global world (Idris, 2000). In both countries, China and Indonesia, the Internet plays a crucial role for the transnational social/religious movement in a globalized network society. In China it has bee used for the promotion of the Falungong, a quasi-religious sect led by Chinese guru Li Hongzhi based in the U.S. (Androff Jr., 2001) that was finally banned by Chinese government (Hepinstall, 2001). While in Indonesia, the fall of Suharto's New Order regime was said to be backed up by an-email list providing the intellectual elite of Indonesia with the right ammunition to counter the propaganda machine of Suharto. That list, titled the Apakabar list, was moderated by an American from Maryland in the U.S. Authors claimed that the list, which uses Bahasa Indonesia as the main language, played a crucial role in the fall of the regime (Harsono, 2001).

Transnational cyberpolitics also played a role in Japan. The protest movements concerning the Okinawan Prefecture and Ainu are good examples, in which civil society uses the Internet to give strength to their movements. Without support from the Internet to inform supporters around the world, these cases might not have gotten as much high attention. Moreover, civil society in Indonesia has developed their "guerilla movement" with utilizing Japanese satellite and cooperating with a global actor (Japan Corporation Satellite and WIDE Japan) which had a global project (the Asian Internet Initiative Project) to create a mass base for the Internet (Lim, 2003). It gave an opportunity to civil society to circumvent rules imposed by the Indonesian government.

In addition, political parties in both Japan and Indonesia demonstrate similarity in Internet usage to open up new opportunities. In Japan, small political parties use the Internet to attract potential voters. The Internet has had significant impact on the fortunes of minor parties, opening up cross-party competition and enhancing their calls for legislative reform (Tkach-Kawasaki, 2003). Similarly, in Indonesia, the Internet became a new space for political parties to express their opinions, and build dynamic alliances and a broad national coalition (Hill, 2003). In this point, the political parties in Japan and Indonesia found an alternative media to save time and money to attract their potential voters. The Internet is clearly opening up new channels for smaller parties, candidates, interest groups, and politically aware individuals to reach the public.

South Korea, as a country that does not have strict regulation about Internet, the cooperation between government and Private Company has opened new ways of Internet to be a key role in president election. For the future, the Internet will be used as an electronic election like what the United States did for president's election in 2004. The Internet has empowered the individual to have a greater level of participation in the political process, if that person is already pre-disposed to be active in civic life. The support of youth generation who is familiar with the Internet

early will be a great potential influence for politics culture. In this case Indonesia can learn much from South Korea to use the Internet to build positive image. The Internet will be seen as a new and alternative mean of communication because the huge emerging of Internet café in Indonesia.

Conclusion

Each countries, China, Indonesia, Japan, and Korea, has its own unique to use the Internet in their political system. In government level, the Internet becomes a part to establish and maintain the power. Some countries such as China, Indonesia try to control the Internet, while Japan and Korea take benefits from the high penetration of Internet in their society to disseminate information about the power. Meanwhile in civil society level, the Internet becomes a means to distribute the information about their movement. It also becomes a tool to show the existence of civil society. Therefore, the Internet could be believed that it might play an important role to create new type of government and society.

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