Is this a country?

The Candlelight movement protests as a force impacting democracy in Korea

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Abstract

South Korea has gone from a military dictatorship to being the highest-ranking Asian country in terms of democracy over the last 35 years. In 2016, massive social movement protests broke out after media uncovered accounts of widespread corruption by then President Park Geun-Hye. These public demonstrations became known as the Candlelight movement of 2016-2017, lasting for six months to culminate in impeachment and sentencing of the Korean leader. This paper takes aim at explaining the impact of social movements on democracy by analyzing the Candlelight protests based on a theoretical framework by Charles Tilly, defining a conception of democracy from a perspective of the government-citizen relationship. The framework presents five aspects of democracy, providing the structure for the analysis: *rules-based*, *no exception*, *no exclusion, responsiveness* and *protection*. The research concludes that the social movement in Korea had substantial impact on the institutional accountability of the President, but did not produce outcomes in policymaking reform to effectively change long-term structural deficiencies in the country's democracy.

Keywords: social movements, democracy, South Korea, Park Geun-Hye, Candlelight protests 2016-2017, corruption
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1   Introduction

In the past 100 years, South Korea has experienced imperialism, civil war, military dictatorship and persistent marches for democratic liberty. Since the crowning political reform of 1987 introduced an electoral voting system with separation of powers, Korea kept progressing and developed new political structures. Bordering the least free country in the world and situated in a region with few governmental counterparts, achieving a peaceful transition of power in 1997 proved sustained efforts in consolidation of democracy (Jonsson 2018, p.211;229). However, every incumbent president since the turnover has been implicated in disclosure of fraud (Kalinowsky 2016, p.637), with the most recent instance evoking unprecedented public reaction among Korean citizens. Following media exposing Choi Soon-sil, a close friend of then President Park Geun-Hye with no formal affiliation to any political office, in hold of classified government documents, people took to the streets demanding their leader to step down (Jonsson 2018, p.244).

Achieving democratization had not put an end to public protesting in Korea. Instead, manifesting disagreement regarding governmental policymaking is considered part of the socio-political culture within a democratic framework (Kim 2017). Not since the pro-democracy rallies had the country seen a social undertaking comparable to what these street protests evolved into as the largest in Korean history, the Candlelight movement of 2016 (Choe 2016).

The affair, becoming known as Choi Soon-sil gate, was initiated when a conservative media company, JBTC, released information about the documents on October 24, 2016. Park Geun-Hye made a brief public appearance to apologize but did not acknowledge any wrongdoing. Her attempt to minimize the situation was not received well and five days later the first protest was held with a march reaching the Blue House, office building of Park Geun-Hye. From that day forward, over the consecutive six months, vigils took place every Saturday evening with people gathering to voice their disapproval with the presidential misconduct, all the while mounting evidence suggesting inappropriate exchanges between Park and Choi kept being released into the media (Park 2019, p.75-76). The movement was organized by EAPR, Emergency Action for Park's Resignation, a coalition force representing more than 1500 civic groups. Similar arrangements previously had not managed to successfully unite behind a distinct cause in such a consolidated manner (Kim 2017). An estimated 200.000 people participated in the capital city during the second Candlelight protest on November 5. It then continued growing substantially, drawing a million demonstrators the following Saturday (Yi 2020, p.256). At its peak, the social movement saw 2.3 million citizens across the country taking part

in the protest against the President (Park 2019, p.81). Park Geun-Hye stood firm in refusing to admit wrongdoing or giving in to the movement's chants, asking for her resignation. Her approval ratings plummeted from 40% to 4%, the lowest ever reported for any Korean leader (Shin & Moon 2017, p.119). After the last vigil in April of 2017, a total of 17 million people had showed up to protest across the country (Yi 2020, p.263).

Choi had utilized her relationship with President Park to seize considerable financial funding from chaebol companies, Korea's big conglomerate businesses, bargaining for favorable policy outcomes. Park had also granted Choi extensive influence relating to presidential duties (Drysdale et al, 2017). Aside from the discovery of possessing highly authorized documents, Choi had also been directly involved in proof-reading speeches and making notes on policy drafting. Indictments were made on counts of bribery and financial extortion (Kim 2019, p.8-9). Park Geun-Hye was voted out of office following impeachment procedures in the national assembly shortly after the protests gathered record numbers in public participation. After careful deliberation during the initial weeks of 2017, with resolute continuance of protests, the impeachment verdict was eventually upheld in Constitutional Court. The social movement firmly remained in place on Saturdays, urging for full prosecution of Park. On March 30, 2017, the ousted President was arrested, subsequently tried and finally convicted on 21 accounts, including "failure to uphold the constitution" (Kim 2019, p.9).

Koreans were undoubtedly left upset and in disbelief by the uncovering of illegal collusion between Park and Choi. Many also felt the country had been "shamed" by the extensive, criminal behavior. One response articulating how many citizens felt about the abuse of public office was written out on banners at the vigils condemning their leader (Park 2019, p.163); *"Is this a country?"*

1.1   Purpose and research question

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of social movements on democracy, by studying the case of Korea's Candlelight movement protests in 2016 - 2017 against President Park Geun-Hye. South Korea has a prominent modern history of social movements as a powerful force in prompting political change and democratization. There is also a social culture of agreement and hierarchical loyalty, however the people turned on their elected president following revelations of Presidential misconduct by providing government insight and resources to a close friend without ties to the office in any professional capacity.

This paper will highlight the democracy in Korea with the help of a theoretical framework outlining mechanisms that manifest impact and shortcomings on democratic institutions. I aim to provide an explanation to the question: *How did the Candlelight movement of 2016-2017 impact democracy in South Korea*?

2 Literary review

2.1 Related research

Mi Park has written a book that covers the 2016 Candlelight movement, including a discussion based on social movement theory in explaining aspects present in the structures and context of the movement that rendered it successful. Park (2018, p.36) presents five factors deemed notable in enabling the protests' accomplishments. Park emphasizes the democratic structures, where the evolvement into procedural democracy along with a greater separation between delegated and direct democracy meant people had increased freedom to express disapproval, but also did so more due to perceived inaction by lawmakers. The win was also supported through an active Korean civil society headed by diverse, widespread cooperation, and media sphere allowing for criticism of leadership. This media includes an expanding online presence of communities and forums engaging in political discussion and commentary.

Finally, Park credits a culture of "Duty to Protest", referencing experiences leading back to public strives against political power in the 19th century and more recently struggles in advocacy of civil rights and democratization in the 1960's through 1980's (Park 2018, p.36-47). Park also uses social movement theory to assess the 2016 protests from angles of resource mobilization theory, political opportunity theory and framing theory. The discussion concludes that more attention to cultural aspects is needed to understand prevalent conditions regarding resource mobilization and political opportunity. Framing theory likewise could use a wider perspective on history and culture in conceptualizing a framing that provides context necessary to analyze social movements (Park 2018, p.62-63).

Kim Sungmoon (2018) pursues an analysis focusing on Confucianism as the influential idea underpinning Korean democratic civil society and contributing to the Candlelight movement. Kim argues that Confucianism has had a crucial impact on Korean culture and history, also during transition to democracy. Thus, taking important cultural factors of Confucianism into account, allows for better understanding of the rallying of Presidential demonstrations in 2016 (Kim 2018, p.330-332). Kim also centers his article on the ideas regarding authority, and interpretation of public reaction to Park Geun-Hye as a leader in the face of allegations and subsequent political and judicial processes of indictment for wrongdoing. Her crimes in practice were seemingly not the worst, but the experienced betrayal of public trust in both in her abuse of leadership and her conduct in response to, mainly, the tragic sinking of a ferry in the Sewol accident

of 2014. Kim describes a placing of great value in normative virtues considered as bested upon Park Geun-Hye as protector of the Korean people and embodiment of a good leader. Through the display of lacking empathy and refusal of accountability in connection with the Sewol accident, the revelations of misconduct further cemented a public judgement of Park Geun-Hye as failing to represent the standards expected from and desired in a leader. This aspect of putting normative values into the leadership role, Kim argues, originates from a Confucian idea of trust between a leader and its people in protecting and caring for public well-being. The Sewol accident proved an ultimate inadvertence of protecting civilian lives as Korea's leader was absent from her office when 306 people died, while the crowned "Choi-Sil-gate" consolidated perception of Park as not putting public interest before her own or those of her close acquaintance. As Kim phrases it, "The president did not possess the right moral character expected of the nation's highest political leader" (Kim 2018, p.343-246).

"Confucian democratic civil society can provide a useful conceptual tool by which to not only philosophically construct a vision of civil society that is culturally relevant and politically practicable but also to critically evaluate the politics of civil society in the East Asian context" (ibid, p.230). Kim also describes a connection between Confucian ideas of morality in political practice as one of the driving forces behind the protest movement. Having the President's inability to uphold a considered standard of morality as characterizing theme within public instigation demonstrates a Korea inhibiting "Confucian democratic civil society", concurrently also revealing the distinct discrepancy from liberal pluralistic culture (ibid, p.247).

2.2   Exploring non-Western democracy

As this paper concern a case in Korea, a non-Western country, there are a few aspects regarding context of culture and history that I would like to review before going forward.

There has been an increasingly prominent debate among political science scholars on non-Western perspectives relating to central theories on IR and political systems. This entails criticism of inherently imperialistic origins in Western theorizing, considered universally applicable and thereby missing the mark when attempting to explain functioning outside of the Western cultural context. Shilliam ([1]2011, p.3) emphasizes the need for expanding attention within theory to traditions and lived experiences in the 'peripheral' sphere of global structures, creating interactions with ideas not rooted in colonial history. Shilliam also argues that traditional theories within IR and political science, stemming from Western thinkers and perceived as appropriate frameworks when conducting analysis on a global scale, prohibit inward critical reflection on experiences regarding negative dynamics within the 'core' as supposed to 'periphery'. Moreover, when thoughts collide in contact with non-Western ideas, Shilliam ([2]2011, p.15) identifies a

tendency to disregard the latter as flawed or even faulty in not adhering to the "epistemological common sense of Western Academy".

On the topic of defining democracy, Birch (1993, p.68) claims differences between the American and European values and system, making up the Western sphere, significant enough that generalizing about democracy without considering contextual specifics, undermines the outcome of such an attempt. Political science strives to generalize, but equally needs to regard context and differing experiences in the endeavor (ibid). On the other end, Gerard Alexander (2005, p.155) argues that the inherently Western liberal model is fundamental to establishing legitimate democracy - there are no other options.

However, the UN General Assembly declared in 2007 that there is no "single model of democracy", albeit common features within democratic states (UN General Assembly 2007). With an increasingly globalized world, creating interactions across cultural, political and value-based borders, the distinction between Western and Non-Western has become less apparent (Youngs 2015, p.146). There is thus a need to engage non-Western ideas of democracy to create a more nuanced perspective, based on the reality of diversity within democratic development (ibid, p.153). An emergence of democratic architecture being constructed outside of the Western sphere, in a manner quite different from traditional ideas of democratic progression brings attention to a need of contemporizing conventional epistemology regarding democratic ideas. Otherwise, crucial comprehension of the intricate nature displayed through current changes will be lost in understanding non-Western ways of democracy (Chou & Beausoleil 2015, p.2-3). Moyn & Gagnon (2020, p.100) argue how a narrow notion of the frame containing valid ideas limits the potential for scientific knowledge. They conclude by stating: "Expansion of the scope of intellectual history bears on what traditions will matter for the future".

As with most political science, this debate is multifaceted. When making a case for epistemological considerations, distinguishing our paths to knowledge (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p.12), I will adopt a stance on science as able to discern connections regarding objective truths about the nature of society, regardless of personal belief. These observations through analyzing examinations can help shape knowledge and understanding about our world (Esaiasson et al 2017, p.19).

Due to Western predominance within academia on IR, non-Western areas have increasingly adopted language and concepts to participate scientifically. Separate schools have emerged and created new theories based on 'peripheral' experience, to help interpret different cultural contexts. Andrey Makarychev and Viatcheslav Morozov discern a tendency to overly signify the potential contributions of non-Western national schools as the sole way to attain culturally diverse knowledge. They reference Russian theory building to demonstrate the issue. Ascertaining the Russian context to be sufficiently distinguished from Western perspectives. Such Russian theory has consequently rendered conventional theory useless in theoretical interpretation regarding Russia. Scholars have thus attempted to create an entirely separate theoretical infrastructure. One cannot assume unequivocal improvement of scientific knowledge purely because they originate from a specific location (2013, p.328-329). In Makarychev and Morozov's view, "geographical location of the site

of knowledge production does not really matter, and thus, the expectation that bringing in theoretical perspectives existing in a peripheral country X is going to enrich our knowledge is not justified in itself" (Makarychev & Morozov 2013, p.336).

While diversified referencing is needed to escape a Western hegemony within IR and political theorizing, demanding individually constructed subunits from entirely national perspectives poses risk of undermining the ability to make overarching evaluations (ibid, p.337). Generalizability carries essential weight in scientific development to enhance knowledge (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p.68). Putting excessive emphasis on distinctive testimony exposes a counterintuitive reversal back to the issue of widely applying Western-centered ideas while disregarding circumstances. Considering preeminent, non-Western schools sufficient to draw conclusions would be to simply replace what has been rejected as Western dominance, serving the same purpose of limiting a more extensive framework (Makarychev & Morozov 2013, p.346).

2.3   The particular case of Korean democracy

South Korea's elements of Confucian traditional ideas also affect how this case can be comprehended. Within political and social science, Confucianism has been discussed as an alternative framework to Western liberal democracy. Ackerly (2015, p.549) suggests studying possible perspectives on democracy that Confucian thought offer, could also serve to produce outcomes of introspection into issues prevalent among current democracies.

There are also important cultural aspects to consider as central influences of values and ideas on politics. According to Youngs (2015), a general supposition considers non-Western countries as valuing social consensus above political diversity. These priorities enable a tendency to place authority in determining what norms and ideas should shape society in the hands of political leadership. South Korea has implemented a liberally democratic form of government but remains abiding to distinctly conservative social and cultural values. There is no proven correlation between political administrations and placement on a scale of social ideologies (Youngs 2015, p.144). However, South Korea presents an interesting example in the journey made from military authoritarian nation to democracy while maintaining traditional values.

Dating back to the authoritarian days, big businesses remain closely intertwined in many societal areas of Korea's economy, politics and civil society through their extensive financial leverage along with majority representation among most core sectors of business and industry. So called chaebol companies hold incontestable hegemonic positions that represent interests in most bigger industry sectors. In legal cases on financial criminal offenses, courts have typically produced outcomes benefiting chaebol blocks over plaintiffs representing the working class (Choi 2010, p.10;14). The lack of transparency in chaebol affairs prohibits public insight, and

effectively hampers people's ability to exercise accountability. The economic authority affects media through widespread funding. Chaebol agents also exert political power through large shareholding within the national economy and trade, making attempts to advocate favorable direction in policy decision-making while opposing restrictive reform (Choi 2010, p.7-9).

In an Asian context, democratic regimes are rare, especially in the liberal sense of Korea's development to represent a high performing democracy according to all five aspects of measurement - the only country in Asia to do so, alongside Taiwan (IDEA 2019, p.167). Whereas Korea is considered as experiencing low levels of corruption (IDEA 2019, p.202), according to a survey by Transparency International 55% of Korean respondents consider government corruption a big problem. People surveyed perceived corruption to be prominent especially among elected officials in the Assembly, where 65% believed most members of Parliament were affiliated with corrupt practices. A slight majority views corruption as having decreased over the past year, at 43%. In relation to other countries in the survey, Koreans placed 15 out of 18 when asked if they considered ordinary citizens as able to challenge the corrupt structures (Transparency International 2020, p.30; 50). During the 19th International Anti-Corruption Conference in December of 2020, Ms. Jeon Hyun-Hee, Chairwoman of Korean Anti-Corruption and Civil Right Commission, presented a strategy of "nurturing good governance", focused on promoting integrity, transparency and expertise as ways of combatting corruption. (19th IACC 2020, Korean Plenary: New integrity Strategies for Society of Trust). The head of the OECD working group on Bribery, Mr. Kos Dragos, emphasized the general need for increased public trust in government to lower prevalence of corrupt practices (ibid).

In summary, International Relations theory and political science provides a solid basis for studies of democracy and social movements. In a non-Western case of popular protest and democracy reform, local historic, cultural and social conditions add layers of understanding to the movement's motives, actions and impact.

3   Theory

3.1   Theoretical framework

Attempting to better understand the role of social movements in promoting democracy, Charles Tilly (2003, p.25-26) provides a useful point of departure and a definition of democracy that "focuses on the quality of relations between citizens and agents of their government". In the context of this study, Tilly's definition of a democratic regime can be summarized as follows, where concepts in italics are produced here for the purpose of our analysis in section 5 of this paper.

1. Relations between citizens and their government should be rules-based and categorical, not based on individual connections and benefits – *rules-based*.
2. Such regular relations should include all citizens without exceptions for an elite – *no exception*.
3. Those relations should be equal for all citizens and groups without exclusions from such rights as voting or owning property – *no exclusion.*
4. Government composition and performance should change in response to binding consultations with citizens such as elections and referenda – *responsiveness*.
5. Citizens, not least members of minority groups, should receive protection from arbitrary action by governmental agents – *protection*.

Tilly concludes that democratization "means formation of a regime featuring relatively broad, equal, categorical, binding consultation and protections" and that it "is a change in the character of public politics, a change towards protected consultation" (2003, p.26). It is the role that social movements play in a move towards democracy that forms the overriding concern in this study, based on lessons learned from the Korean Candlelight revolution of 2016.

3.2   Social movement theory

Social movement theory has emerged within the realm of social science to explain the features behind people gathering in striving to achieve an outcome of changing certain circumstances in society. It is a theory "worthy of scholarly

attention given their importance as a means of social and political change in society" (Peoples 2019, s.31).

Examining the extent to which social movements produce direct results of change is challenging - both in terms of having an impact on policymaking, and even more in a broader sense of democratic institutions (Rootes 2003, p.154). Ability to create shifts in policy within a democratic context is tightly integrated with attaining a change in public opinion. Social movements have opportunity to influence by bringing attention to issues and educating or conveying arguments. It can also serve as a contrary agent to powerful actors within financial organizations. The relationship between social movements and democracy is significant because protests assume a public opposing force against publicly elected regimes, assigning the phenomenon a complex dynamic component in a society with political democracy (Rootes 2003, p.154-155).

An active culture of social movements should be considered to represent increased political participation, indicating that society accept collective action as legitimate means of objecting outside institutional frames, allowed within realms of democratic liberty and constitutional freedoms. It also demonstrates public realization that people hold certain power to oppose government management and demand accountability. Hence, social movements act as enforcement of liberal democracy (Rootes 2003, p.156-157).

3.3   Democracy

The basic function of social movements depends on principles within democracy. It requires a degree of "protection" and "consultation" (Tilly 2003, p.35). Hence, there is an inherently causal relationship between social movements and democracy, operating in a way that reinforce one another.

Social movements emerge to raise awareness, question or invite conversation about issues considered important in society. Democracy produces increased liberty and freedom to express grievances and challenge authority. People are given power to elect representatives which signifies how they want institutions to function (Tilly 2003, p.24-25). Constituting "protection, participation, accountability, transparency and well-being" by promoting rights, freedom and power to citizens, democracy bring opportunities to readily organize and legal framework for carrying out protests (Jasper 2014, p.18).

Protests can however emerge as a disruption to the democratic system, proving a challenge to ordinary functions in that protests generally manifest political participation with aims to raise issues outside the realm of systematic elective process. A form of "cultural persuasion" wherein a democracy, the size of a movement translates into public support and measure of its "moral legitimacy" (Jasper 2015, p.164).

4 Method

4.1 Research design

In considering what method would best be suited to investigate and answer the research question, it is crucial to take circumstances of the issue at hand into account. As this paper treats a case having already taken place, it is not viable to perform any investigation at scene. Furthermore, current global affairs of a widespread pandemic in combination with possibilities in relation to the scope of this work, regarding finance, time and expectations, prohibit the prospect of travelling to Korea to gather information qualitatively. In my view, the most appropriate and feasible method to study the role of social movements' contribution to democracy in Korea is through a qualitative case study, using material found through extensive search via the mediums available to me as a student, provided by sources online and through libraries in Lund. The paper highlights a case of people's demonstrations against a sitting president, accused of severe wrongdoing in the face of her obligations and duty to the democracy and responsibility toward the people by whom she was elected. A case study method appears most valid as the approach to carry out the process of understanding the impact of the Candlelight movement.

The case study method has preferential benefits when used to investigate questions of "how" or "why", concerning a "contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control" (Yin 2009, p.13).

4.2 Case study

Since the aim of this study is to analyze the Candlelight movement of 2016-2017, this paper is representing a singular case, as opposed to comparative analysis. It is thus an intensive study, enabling closer and more detailed focus to deduct specifically relevant material in relation to the scientific question substantiating what the paper seeks to convey (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p.80). Case study methods have been widely criticized for their limited ability to advance generalizing findings, or menace of selection bias. The latter is a tendency mainly occurring with quantitative methods of research and thus overstated in terms of impact on case studies (George & Bennett 2005, p.23;84). Single case studies attempting to deduct causal relations have also been questioned for lacking additional units of analysis,

as ability to make comparisons is considered an important component when drawing conclusions (Esaiasson et al 2017, p.109).

However, according to George & Bennett (2005, p.84) these concerns are overblown, as authors of single-case studies usually do not produce excessive generalizations, but instead manage to contribute with important, distinct features of causal relations, providing valid arguments for implementing a smaller scope of cases. It also serves more as a provider to develop and enrich theory, rather than singlehandedly explain something universal through statistical evidence (Yin 2009, p.15). Notwithstanding, generalizability is a valuable element in scientific work and should be integrated into the core of any research paper in striving to achieve greater scientific understanding regarding concepts, theory and the applicable area of study (Esaiasson et al 2017, p.28).

Internal validity is especially relevant when conducting explanatory research and analysis. This indicates a legitimate connection between units of analysis and conclusions made. In accomplishing to connect the dots and making claims of causal relations, one must make sure to identify potential misleading factors, or spurious variables providing an alternative or the actual explanation. Bringing attention to contesting interpretations is a helpful strategy in trying to enhance internal validity (Yin 2009, p.43). External validity concerns the primary argument of objection towards case study methods in the scientific ability to generalize, generally an aim within political science research as it translates into potential of producing a result easier put into perspective within the area it investigates. It is especially beneficial in case studies, relating back to popular criticism about shortcomings on generalizability (Esaiasson et al 2017, p.59;89;155).

4.3 Process-tracing

In using Charles Tilly's framework of democracy and social movements' ability to impact, I will adopt a method incorporating ideas from process-tracing on the case study of Korea's Candlelight movement protests. The process-tracing method presents a structured way of reviewing a case, looking at underlying reasons leading up to what produces the event representing our case in question. It corresponds to critique about lack of comparative units. By setting up a strategy containing steps within the case, each relating back to the antecedent context, process tracing presents a method applicable on single case study with comparisons being presented in different phases of the procedures, in relation to the cause producing the outcome. This enables testing of theories to find coherence where frameworks can be employed and serve their purpose of assisting in providing tools for analysis (Van Evera 1997, p.70-72).

Process-tracing thus focuses on "the process by which initial case conditions are translated into case outcomes" (ibid, p.64). The structuring of this method renders it capable to improve contributions in generalizing ways by which mechanisms have operated in certain contexts manifested through the individual

case. Thus, it adds significant value to the theorizing aspect, which is otherwise often considered a challenge with single case studies when it comes to making a legitimate claim to the wider discipline (George & Bennett 2005, p.129).

4.4   Demarcation and case selection

There are numerous aspects of relevance to political science regarding the Candlelight protests case. I have decided to focus my study on the perspective of social movements and democracy, determining this an essential part in undertaking research to understand and explain by applying the theoretical framework. I also had to pinpoint a certain angle of approach regarding my perspective to formulate an answerable question by employing theoretical tools, collected material and considering the purpose of this paper. The result is an attempt to explain social movements' impact on democracy, by looking at Korea's protests 2016-2017.

In selecting your case, it is advisable to make considerations based on the "relevance to the research objective" (George & Bennet 2005, p.83). This case was chosen because of the several unique features it inhibits and my view of how this case has the potential to raise questions within different areas of theorizing about social movements and democracy, also in a context of non-Western culture and politics. The Candlelight movement in 2016 emerged as the biggest public manifestation of political disagreement with a President in Korea, overtaking protests precipitating democratization in 1987.

As every previous Korean president has faced accusations of misconduct or corruption to some extent, so was President Park Geun-Hye revealed to have misused her power of office. This time, the people clearly and unrelentingly displayed their anger and disappointment with the betrayal of public trust bested upon the President through democratic election. The protest movement progressed in unprecedented fashion of complete peaceful nature, manifesting as a family-friendly social, festive mass gathering with musical performances, culture workshops and chants humoring the President's shortcomings. The movement saw no clashes with police, vandalizing or violence during the six months that these demonstrations prevailed (Park 2019, p70-71;73).

The Korean Candlelight movement presents a notable display of public political unity in protesting the country leadership by means of decisive, but peaceful demonstrations. There are several aspects of interest in the structured, non-violent proceedings of the protest, rarely seen in such magnitude of social movements elsewhere. This paper delves further into the domestic viewpoint and traces the meaning to democracy in Korea of each element in the monumental wave of popular protest.

The country is considered an anomaly of steadily improved recent democracy, having achieved peaceful transitions of power following every election since 1987 and change between conservative and oppositional government twice. Korea stands

out as a particularly useful case in the study of government – citizens relations, moving from an authoritative state, following a history of imperialism, civil war, military dictatorship and authoritarian state before reaching a sixth reestablishment of the republic in its current democratic system of government (Jonsson 2018, p.10;86).

4.5   Concepts

4.5.1   Social movements

The Candlelight movement is being analyzed in this paper based on a definition as "a sustained challenge to powerholders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those powerholders by means of repeated public displays of that population's worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment" (Tilly 2003, p.23). In connection to development of democracy and contested elections, social movements generally gain greater freedom of expression in supporting opposing sides to current leadership. It also contributes to increased protection of movement and permission to assemble, attributing to a platform and granting means for people not generally able to make their voices heard (ibid, p.25). Social movements are a form of political participation aimed at impacting political policy process and promote change (Birch 1993, p.81)

4.5.2   Corruption

Applying a definition made by Transparency International (2021), corruption is considered as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain".

Corruption is not traditionally defined based on examining it within sets of independent democratic ideals. Daron Navot (2014, p.10) argues a need to "redefine political corruption in a way that will retain its agential core". Corruption is not necessarily used for malicious purposes, for example if one aims to "help a friend". The definition of corruption in a political context use two aspects to make an assessment. Number one; "inclusion of powerful citizens in the category of political corruption where individuals are the source" and number two; "distinction of corrupt political behavior from institutional (structural) corruption where representative democracy and its institutions are the source" (ibid, p.14).

4.5.3   Democracy

This paper has presented an account for the contested nature in current political science debates about democracy, relating to origins of ideas from primarily

Western sources, and how to consider these aspects when faced with a non-Western context. By including different viewpoints and considerations on this topic, democracy can seem even more complex and difficult to conceptualize. However, having a basic comprehension of democracy is important as frame of reference, to analyze how democracy was impacted. A basic definition of democracy is described by Merriam-Webster (n.d) as:

"*a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections*".

I am using Charles Tilly's theoretical framework of democracy, as it proves especially helpful in conducting this study based on the purpose of explaining social movements' impact on democracy. Tilly emphasizes "protected consultation" in his definition of democracy. An essential foundation of a liberal democracy is its institutions and how they deliver. In his seminal book on the role civic traditions play in making democracy work, Robert D. Putnam poses this central question: "What are the conditions for creating strong, responsive, effective representative institutions?" (Putnam 1993, p.6). His simple model of governance to assess institutional performance says:

"socital demands => political interaction => government => policy choice => implementation" (ibid, p.9).

"What is less known is that we do not know what democracy is" (Gagnon 2013, p.4). In some aspect, democracy is subject to a definition based upon varying degrees of compatibility with certain ideas of what constitutes a democratic society. What is considered democratic, versus democracy, is neither fully agreed upon in political science study. Democracy is a vague and contested concept, oftentimes influenced by context of values (Birch 1993, p.47). In connection to social movements, the role of democracy can be distinguished in words of John Stuart Mill, declaring that granting elective power to the people instill a sense of increased public commitment to political awareness and engagement (Birch 1993, p.63).

4.6   Material

There are some distinct aspects providing potential obstacles in conducting this paper. The case in question centers in a different country, inhibiting other cultural conducts, language and history. It thus takes getting to understand and know the discrepancies from what I am used to grasping about political structures, beliefs and manners. In terms of material, I am restricted to reading and finding sources in English, as my language abilities do not allow for access to material in Korean. The

material is also limited to what resources are readily available through the databases at my disposal.

The material is primarily second-hand sources, as there are substantial resources describing the case, presenting context of Korean historic culture regarding protests and the public reactions during the Candlelight movement process in 2016-2017. Using secondary source material, or documentation (Yin 2009, p.101) is helpful from a validity standpoint since documentation is stationary and easily revisited, providing high reliability (Teorell & Svensson 2007, p.56-57) and transparency in the process of conducting this case study. With secondary sources, awareness of potential author bias is important, and using more sources is beneficial in this regard to collect and present information consistent across multiple accounts (Yin 2009, p.103). When doing research to find secondary sources I have been using keywords such as "South Korea", "Candlelight protests", "social movement theory", "culture" and "democracy" in different arrangements. I tried to limit the number of keywords used, not to diverge from the core terms of the paper, while also maintaining adequate validity.

Multiple sources of evidence strengthen the authority of collected material and "any case study finding, or conclusion is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information" (Yin 2009, p.114;116). In attempting to gain some background of the case and country, I asked Gabriel Jonsson, lecturer in Korean studies at Stockholm University and Erik Mobrand, currently guest researcher at the Centre for South-East Asian Studies at Lund University, visiting from his position as associate professor of Korean studies at Seoul National University in Korea. I also reached out to Sweden's former ambassador to South Korea, Anne Höglund. The questions talked about will be attached in an appendix of this paper.

Yin (2009, p.109) suggests verifying central information, as it serves an advantageous outcome when collecting reliable material. While these conversations presented me with a solid framework of initial knowledge and understanding, based on personally experienced and professional observations, I have considered the need to verify sources when investigating secondary material.

5 Empirical analysis

5.1 Rules-based

Since democratic reform in 1987, Korea has seen numerous instances of violations regarding its democratic process. There are several accounts describing a culture of corruption and exchanging political favors to gain assembly seats or otherwise political influence (Kirk 2009, p.205; Jonsson 2018, p.10; Choe 2016). Every elected president since 1987 has seen criminal indictment to some extent, based on misusing their position of power (Kalinowsky 2016, p.637). The two consecutive conservative governments between 2008-2017 have since been considered as contributing to certain backsliding of democracy. Increased state infringement on media coverage, censoring criticism of government policies and the punishing of 160 journalists in 2009, continuing with President Park Geun-Hye's appointment of political aides to high-level positions within media networks, contributed to Korea's decline in press freedom (Mosler 2015, p.39-40).

The election of President Park in 2012 involved Korea's National intelligence director redirecting state resources to Park's presidential campaign and contributed to spreading disadvantageous content about the opposing candidate. Investigations into the matter were never initiated during Park's regime, despite her stated commitment (Mobrand 2019, p.127; Park 2019, p.21). Her government also cracked down on dissidents within labor movements and trade unions, terminating the National Teachers Trade Union. Workers' protests were met with police force, at one point causing the death of one protester. Korea's National Intelligence Agency kept a list of people in culture, academia and civil society considered as endorsing opposition or otherwise critical of the government, thereby restricted from receiving government funding. These decisions contributed to a backtracking of civil rights in Korea (Park 2019, p.21-22;27). In 2013, a union strike was met with riot police making several arrests of participating workers and intruding visits to the union's offices. It seemed Park, following her predecessor, Lee Myung-Bak, had shifted policy approaches toward areas evoking authoritarian and illiberal patterns (ibid, p.31-32). The Economist Intelligence Unit's yearly index, ranking the democracy level in each country worldwide, downgraded South Korea from "full democracy" to "flawed democracy" in 2015 (EIU 2016, p.2-3;10).

Table 3
Democracy Index 2006-19

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2008	2006
South Korea	8.00	8.00	8.00	7.92	7.97	8.06	8.06	8.13	8.06	8.11	8.01	7.88

[1]The Economist Intelligence Unit 2020, p.20

South Korea scored a ranking of 8.13 out of 10 in 2012 ([1]EIU 2020, p.20), providing a contesting grasp of the democratic standing at that time compared to the reports suggesting crackdowns on liberal standards. The index is based on measuring four aspects considered as constituting important democratic pillars: "whether national elections are free and fair; the security of voters; the influence of foreign powers on government; and the capability of the civil service to implement policies" ([2]EIU 2020). Currently ranked the highest in Asia, Korea is described as having "broadly strong" democratic institutions. ([2]EIU, 2020)

The EIU accordingly failed to account for the deterioration of media freedom or the apparent rise of nepotism and corruption that the protesters of 2016 reacted against. Transparency International similarly measure perceptions of corruption, compiling data from 13 different resources surveying and reviewing by country ([1]Transparency International 2019). The score for Korea over time displays a decrease in ranking during 2016, followed by steady improvement since ([2]Transparency International 2019). Paradoxically, the Candlelight movement may have found a more conducive platform thanks to prior consolidation of inclusive institutions and more rules-based relations between citizens and their government.

5.2   No exception

The protests constituted an overwhelming stance against Presidential misconduct, the unjust benefits through personal connection and lack of accountability by Park Geun-Hye throughout the proceedings.

Park Geun-Hye was elected President in 2012 with slim margins over her opponent Moon Jae-In. Her political fortune was connected to her fame as daughter to former President Park Chung-Hee, who ruled the country from 1961 until his assassination by the head of Korean Central Intelligence Agency in 1979. As authoritarian ruler, Park Chung-Hee extensively repressed criticism by force, but also initiated the economic reforms considered to have established foundations groundbreaking modernization for the substantial growth of Korea's economy (Kim 2019, p.6-8).

"A regime is not at democracy in any sense […] unless it effectively makes officeholders accountable to the citizenry" (Alexander 2005, p.156).

Despite a structure perceived as entrenched with dubious exchanges of favors and a history of indictments connected to every consecutive leader of public office since 1987, the Candlelight movement demonstrated a sustained ability of citizens to hold political power accountable. Pressure emerging from widespread displays

of disgruntlement in the Candlelight movement signified substantial influence by provoking an institutional reaction. The political and judicial process, closely monitored by public and the media, responded according to democratic principles of equality before the law, held public officials accountable.

Another aspect within the principle of 'no exception' concerns the circumstances leading up to Park Geun-Hye's abuse of power, and moreover the described climate of questionable, or outright corrupt, practices among the higher ranks of societal, political and economic elites. "Democracy is directly harmed when people lack a collective agent they can trust to execute collective decisions because they are effectively disempowered" (Warren 2004, p.335). According to Warren (ibid, p.333), corruption from a democratic standpoint represents actions standing in conflict with inclusion. Political corruption undermines democracy in breeding public mistrust and suspicion, impacting people's belief in their ability to make a difference and thus cripple the power of resistance (ibid, p. 228). This form of exclusion benefits those within a liaison, and harm outsiders (ibid, p.334). The harm being done can be identified by using the reference of democratic principles of inclusion to discern what, and how, mechanisms have been affected. To prevent damage to democratic legitimacy, information, political participation and outreach are necessary components. A characterization of "more democracy", these tools provide important to counteract the corrupt practices that enable exclusion, and foster "empowered inclusion" (ibid, p.340-341).

Financial market power can translate into influence within the political sphere, when economic mechanisms are being used to affect, or engage, political decision-making (Warren 2004, p.340). In the corruption case involving President Park and Choi Soon-Sil, Korea's economic elite, chaebol, were also implicated. As one of several financial providers for Choi's fund, the heir of Samsung, Lee Jae-Yong faced charges on bribing (EIU 2017). The chaebol influence prevents further progress of democracy, diversifying of civil society and implementation of an overarching legal framework. To prevent a norm of political corruption from becoming attached to the structures, labor movements and trade unions must be promoted. (Navot 2014, p.16;19). In Korea, workers' unions have faced lasting resistance from the government in fully consolidating movements to bolster coalitions.

Korea's weak civil society produces low vertical accountability and inadequate public control of political leadership. There are also issues with horizontal accountability, meaning checks and balances between the branches of government. Generally, the judicial agency has not managed to impose sufficient authority in this regard (ibid, p.12).

If horizontal accountability is lacking, the need for media and public awareness becomes more necessary to transparency, by limiting incentives to misuse positions of power. However, when media is being suppressed by the state, as happened in 2008-2012, the ability to impose vertical ability is reduced further. Flaws in the constitutional structures, accounting for inadequate judicial supervision of power suggests flaws in political legitimacy. The Candlelight movement did produce an outcome where the legal branch, ultimately held political power accountable.

Along with a newly elected oppositional President in Moon Jae-in and a campaign platform including new aim at tackling chaebol hegemony and corruption, the possibility for change in economic structures seem more promising (EIU 2017).

The involvement of chaebol in the Park Geun-Hye case gave way to debates about judicial treatment of business and influential economic actors in Korea. Questions have been raised on the interactions between court branches and financial elites. Often perceived as soft managing relating to cases involving chaebol, the indictment of Samsung heir reignited reviews into these matters. As adequate reform into chaebol structures is yet to be introduced, the Economist Intelligence Unit ([2]2020) concludes that Korea warrants regulation of big business influence, financial and political. The EIU ranking in terms of political culture is presented along with advocating policy developments in this area ([2]EIU 2020).

Korea have remaining issues with economic structures centered within a group of large companies, providing conglomerates with high levels of financial influence. Implementing economic structural reform is a policy area having served a long time on the Korean political agenda, yet to be fully realized (Warren 2004, p.340-341). The discrepancy between the chaebol companies and politicians, in relation to ordinary citizens, creates a dynamic of political influence through extensive market shareholding. Along with a lack of transparency, access to the empowering resources aimed at providing knowledge and tools to resist corrupt forces, are perhaps not readily available. "More democracy" is thus needed within the financial system. The movement did accomplish the ousting of President Park Geun-Hye, a vote to impeach her in the Assembly and even a 24-year prison sentencing as payment for her abuse of power while in office. Hence, in the political realm the Candlelight movement secured a historic victory against exceptionalism. In the business sector, about which the movement was deeply concerned but less specific in their demands, far less was achieved to end privilege and elite exceptions.

5.3   No exclusion

Everyone participated in what came to be a diverse assemblage of citizens, united behind demands on the President to step down and be held liable for her actions. Many aspects of the timing and structure of protests every Saturday evening between October of 2016 and April 2017 enabled families to join. Though most participants were aged 30 years or younger, the crowds represented every generation. The events on Saturdays also included a variety of musical performances and participatory games to engage people in a spirit of unity and fun, providing an environment which translated to inviting more people not usually involved in social movements to take part. Internet became a big platform for creating and sharing content on leadership criticism and solidarity with the movement (Park 2019, p.71-72).

The Candlelight movement of 2016-2017 brought together different civic groups, usually operating within separate domains of societal issues, and eventually

political parties also joined in. Testament to the diverse and widespread participation, the protests continued growing and elevate the pressure on Korea's democratic system to respond (Yi 2020, p.257). "Street protesters and opposition lawmakers found themselves in sync throughout the impeachment campaign as well as the subsequent legal proceedings" (Kim 2017).

People were unified in their disappointment, betrayal and shame brought forward by the Choil Soon-Sil scandal, but the protests also emerged as a way of helping to create a more positive atmosphere, shaped by the experience of the public rally. Seeing other people sharing emotions and expressing common objections also produced faith in their fellow countrymen, showing up in great numbers to demonstrate that abuse of power was not to be tolerated. United in having been subjected to the dishonest leadership by Park Geun-Hye, the social movements also expressed solidarity, pride and hope (Park 2019, p.124-125).

The Candlelight demonstrations gathered varying grievances about the current state of politics and centered their narrative on demands directed at Park Geun-Hye, reworking main aims as the process moved forward. At first assuming a position that urged the removal of Park, the movement gradually became more consolidated when President Park insisted on her innocence and refused to resign, ultimately calling for impeachment once the issues were raised in the National Assembly. Following the court ruling to affirm the impeachment verdict reached in parliament, protestors came out and demanded Park Geun-Hye to be arrested for her crimes (Yi 2020, p.258-259). Without the Candlelight movement, the President most likely would not have met the same fate. The public pressure mounted on the National Assembly, hosting a conservative majority, to accomplish a vote of impeaching the party's own President (Yi 2020, p.258). Despite previous legal issues involving presidents, Park became the first president ousted, and by a conservative parliament at that.

Mobrand (2019, p.95) suggests that an active civil society movement does not necessarily represent healthy democratic structures, but instead could indicate a sharp distance between public participants and party politics. If access to political influence by professional appointment is discouraged or obstructed, the only channel by which to attempt putting pressure and inspire change could be by taking to the streets. Civil movements only prove a significant political voice to the extent that they can make a difference and influence decision making. However important, achieving change through social movement and public participation can enforce public awareness and belief in political power held by the people in a democracy. Keeping a check on power is needed to gather up resistance to threats against liberty and progress (Park 2019, p.161).

Political mobilization through social movements enables more widespread publicly accessible engagement. Korea's political system does not provide many outlets for political influence among less socio-economically privileged citizens, outside of public elections. The party system is criticized by many political science scholars for its lack of proper inclusive structuring. Social movements thereby present an important entry to the political stage for ordinary people, which explain why the method of protesting has become a big part, and popularized mean, of

expression in society. Unfortunately, the social movements have not served to enhance, or solidify, the restructuring of political parties (Choi 2010, p.19;21).

In a nutshell, Korean social movements in themselves have been inclusive and egalitarian but have so far fallen short of forcing governance systems to reverse its exclusion practices.

5.4   Responsiveness

The demands of protestors attached to the Choi-sil scandal were realized through a political process in the assembly, where a conservative majority caved under pressure from the public and voted to impeach the party President.

The protests leading up to impeachment and subsequent ousting of the President by Korean Constitutional court paved the way for a peaceful transition of power. Elections held two months after the courts' verdict were released saw overwhelming support for liberal candidate Moon Jae-In, running on a platform of promise to reform the system seen as constructed to condition the previous presidential misconduct (Park 2019, p.35;135).

The societal reaction to the Choi Soon-Sil scandal was overwhelming. "The media exposed the problem; the masses demanded the president step down; members of the National Assembly agreed to pass an impeachment motion; the Constitutional Court judged in favor of impeachment" (Yin 2020, p254). The cause of events left some people arguing against an idea of the Candlelight social movement as serving significant purposes beyond ensuring that basic democratic functions of Korea's political system were not sidestepped by criminal behavior (ibid).

The impact of protests played an important part in vertical accountability, putting the lawbreaking leader behind bars through meeting across barriers of ideology or political hierarchies. Even so, these collective efforts did not produce much from a long-term perspective. Neither were new policies based on Choi Soon-Sil gate enacted, nor regulations of risk factors structurally embedded that permitted Park Geun-Hye's conduct. No similarly deep-seated issues were brought to attention in a way that made overarching changes, during the incident. Korea's democratic legitimacy was defended, however only from current forces of power (Yi 2020, p. 261). Although the people did take a last stand during the final stretch of these events in electing Moon Jae-In as the new president. He ran on a promise to change by reforming the economic system, limiting powerful authority of chaebol organizations and getting rid of corruption (Park 2019, p.163). Koreans put their faith in his words, as he won by a large margin. According to an election poll conducted on voters, one main incentive in choosing to elect Moon was "to clean up deeply rooted evils" (Kim & Moon 2017, p.124;[2]EIU 2020).

The smooth transition between the outgoing and incoming administrations in 2017 following the impeachment of Park Geun-hye was testament to the maturity of South Korean democracy. Throughout the corruption scandal and the impeachment procedure, the country's strong institutional framework supported

overall political stability, if not major government reform. Young voters, who had already played a prominent role during the 2012 presidential election, strongly backed liberal candidates and helped to support the political participation score ([2]EIU 2020). It would seem reasonable to conclude that the governance system was decisively responsive to the Candlelight movement. However, Shin (2020, p.103;107-108) worry about the potential of a norm by opposition forces to impeach presidents, which could derail democracy in Korea. Fragile institutions unable to meet public expectations on policy implementing, could end up accelerating a politically polarized society resorting to "street democracy" over the legitimate system in place.

5.5 Protection

During protests in 2008, the Lee Myung-Bak regime responded forcefully with police interventions occurring, to apprehend masses. Sweeping arrests of participants wounded several people, ultimately stifling the movement from growing any further. This created a hindsight view of 2008 social movement as fruitless, since nothing palpable came from it (Yi 2020, p.248-249). This is especially the case for those who believe that mass movements must result in the development of democratic institutions and new political parties, such as political scientists adhering to traditional theories of politics (ibid, p.249).

The events during 2016-2017 saw no repeating of post-democratization authoritarian forces to combat demonstrations. Protest participants stayed peaceful during the 2016 Candlelight protests as the vigils also proceeded with complete absence of government attempts at dispersing crowds or intervene in demonstrations. Demonstrations appeared well structured and operated in an orderly fashion, actively encouraging a non-violent approach (Kim 2018, p.339).

A revealed document, produced by Park Geun-Hye's Defense Security Command, DSC, referred to plans of deploying military resources to "keep order" in case protests would not settle down in the case of an inconclusive impeachment procedure. According to the documents, the DSC anticipated that protesters could escalate the movement into a "revolution" with violence and destruction, by which point military intervention had been contemplated. The action described falls under Korea's so called "garrison decree", allowing deployment of military forces without parliamentary approval (Kim & Kim 2018). Having not been implemented since before democratization, the garrison decree was abolished in 2018 following debates since the DSC document surfaced (Seong 2018).

Managing to carry out weekly protests with millions of participants over a period of six months without instances of violence or unrest is a remarkable achievement. The government being under fire and within their legal ability to impose restrictions or resort to forcefully suppressing protesters, refrained from doing so. It serves as great empowerment to witness how the people can exert influence and make a change by uniting in voicing political grievances.

Wins for the people positively enforced potential for future collective action (Yi 2020, p.263), which in turn is a reinforcement in terms of public political participation, enhancing democratic principles.

6   Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the relationship between social movements and democracy. Observing an interesting case in the Korean Candlelight movement protests 2016-2017, this purpose has been translated into the making of an analysis concerning the events following a scandal of corruption implicating Korean President Park Geun-Hye. I have attempted to apply a theoretical framework based on Charles Tilly's concept of democracy, from the standpoint of social movements' impact. In the following section, the findings of this study will be presented, making up a conclusion of what can be said in regard to social movements' impact on democracy after having studied the Candlelight movements in Korea.

6.1   Candlelight movement's impact on democracy

Rules-based

The social movement amassed record-breaking public turnout, united behind a demand of the President to resign, steadfastly declaring a dismay with the lack of accountability on the part of Park Geun-Hye in her refusal to accept blame or admit to criminal mismanagement as leader. Protests unequivocally called for an immediate and comprehensive response in the democratic institutions of the country. The President was tried by the system in place, aimed through the constitution to enforce actions of consequence in the case of operating outside legal boundaries.

While vertical accountability was successful through the popular holding of government responsible, questions remain with regard to transparency and consistency in the application of the rule of law. It is not evident that a similar rules-based outcome would be achieved again without an equally powerful protest.

No exception

Transgression is not something that should be treated differently depending on the offender's position in society. The social movement accomplished to set in motion, and subsequently push through all along, the furtherance of an institutional process culminating in punishing Park Geun-Hye by way of sentencing. Managing to exert power and influence in numbers, the Korean democracy was put to a test of its institutional capabilities. Considering the contextual backdrop where crimes committed by social elites generally receive, or is greeted with, a softer approach in courts, the outcome in this case signified a victory in not ending by making

exceptions on social ranking. Additionally, when looking to cultural tendencies to hold regard of authority and consensus, the movement broke new ground in prompting the National Assembly impeachment procedures to indict their own leader.

The social movement culminated in the election of Moon Jae-In, presenting himself as a political antidote to the destructive forces of corruption and clientelism put on full display through the Choi Soon-sil scandal. However, the positive impact on democracy should not be overstated. There are still issues in terms of exception throughout the institutional structures, addressed on a surface level by the Candlelight protests, but left out in the principal demand driving the point among the people. Chaebols remain with disproportionately extensive power to influence important democratic dimensions.

No exclusion

An important step forward by the protests came in the achievement of unprecedented diversity and number of participants.

Again, the social movement did not focus on persistent political and economic system dynamics that actively prohibit inclusion. Consequently, more profound changes to systemic exclusion were not achieved. The weak party system poses a severe restriction to inclusiveness by way of political participation, an issue barely even brought to light in the Candlelight movement.

Responsiveness

In many ways, the pressure from the broadly popular Candlelight movement was met by political and judicial measures to meet their demands. Parliament acted and the court upheld the conviction of President Park.

Whereas the protest was unprecedented in size and impact, changes were somewhat superficial. A widespread view that corruption is common and serious was prevalent for decades and prevail to this day. Korea's democracy has evolved fast and become continental Asia's strongest, and popular protest has repeatedly been a driving force.

A risk is that street rallies de facto replace more institutionalized forms of consultation between citizens and government. A tradition to overthrow every sitting president would not be conducive to the political system.

Protection

In its sweepingly peaceful comportment, the Candlelight social movement succeeded to uphold dignity as a sign of, and possibly contribution to, the maturity of Korean democracy. Indicating adherence to cultural traditions of respect for social movements as a way of stating grievances, and through maintaining a non-violent, free and popular atmosphere, the protests did not give incentives to authorities' provocations or repression.

6.2   Continued research

After investigating social movements' impact on democracy using the Candlelight movement, I have contrived several areas relating to my study that can make for advantageous scientific furthering in the realm of political science. The debate on non-Western conceptions is sure to advance going forward, as the emergence of influential agents from outside Western contexts promotes different experiences and perceptions of central notions, already scientifically contested in nature. Delving more into cultural aspects of governance, democracy and corruption, e.g, was something this paper considered to include, but fell short due to the restrictions presented within the realm of time and space of this paper. On the topic of Korea, there is still a lot to be said in discussing Confucianism as possible alternative ideological framework to use as reference in exploring societal hierarchies, relationship between culturally traditional values and developing of modern institutions.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Informants through discussions and written communications

Lecturer in Korean Studies at the Department of Asian, Middle Eastern and Turkish Studies - Gabriel Jonsson
Email communications on November 23, 2020

Associate professor of Korean studies at the Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University - Erik Mobrand
Email communications on November 24, 2020

Former Ambassador of Sweden to South Korea 2015-2018 – Anne Höglund
Phone call on December 1, 2020

8.2 Questions

The following set of questions are presented to give an idea about what background information was discussed in communications with informants.

1. How did you experience the emergence of protests in 2016? Media reporting? Reactions from the Blue House? [Office of the President]

2. What did you identify as the primary motive/theme in public grievances and reason for protesting?

3. Did anything surprise you during the course of the events? Perhaps in terms of political reactions, or the judicial process?

4. What were your take-aways once the dust had settled? Were people hopeful about the outcome and future following the protest movement?

5. Could you distinguish an attitude regarding corruption as something considered possible to overcome, or was it rather viewed to be a systemic infection permeating the political structure?

6. How do you view the Candlelight movement from a perspective on Korean democracy? What did it mean to democratic legitimacy, and what dangers were there in connection to it?

7. Were there any issues you felt were not brought up sufficiently during the movement, or became a proper part of the process, which remain a challenge going forward?

8. How could one apply non-Western ideas of democracy when looking at the case of Candlelight protest movements in Korea 2016-2017?