

Democracy in South Korea, 2012

**JUNGHOO KIM, HYUNGCHUL KIM, SEOUNGWON LEE,
YOOSEOK OH, DONGCHOON KIM, YOUNGPYO SEO,
SANGCHUL YOON, KYUNGHEE CHOI, HYUNYUN CHO,
HEEYEON CHO**

Introduction

In 2012, South Korea celebrated a quarter century of having made a visible transition to democracy. Over the last twenty-five years, democracy in Korea has evolved significantly in terms of its procedure. Citizens still profess a high degree of confidence in democracy as the best political arrangement. Yet worries have been rising over the state of democracy in Korea since the Lee Myung-bak administration was inaugurated in 2008. Although a democratic government is characterized by the “continuing responsiveness to the preferences of its citizens” (Dahl 1971, 1) and must guarantee the freedom of expression and communication among the people as the fundamental precondition for its decisionmaking, the Lee administration has been ignoring the people’s opinions and demands, thus fuelling frequent political and social conflicts that mark Korean society now. In particular, the administration’s policy that curbs the freedom of the press is now widely criticized as a representative symptom of basic civil rights in peril. Furthermore, the Lee administration’s penchant for neoliberal economic policy has accelerated the erosion of the middle class and economic bipolarization in Korea, radically weakening key socioeconomic conditions for democracy.

This report contains an assessment of the current state of democracy in Korea using the Asian Democracy Index (ADI) developed by the Democracy and Social Movements Institute at Sungkonghoe University.¹

Junghoon Kim, Hyungchul Kim, Yooseok Oh, Dongchoon Kim, Hyunyun Cho, and Heeyeon Cho are all from the Democracy and Social Movements Institute of Sungkonghoe University. Seungwon Lee is Research Professor at Sogang Global Korean Study Initiative in Sogang University. Youngpyo Seo is Assistant Professor of the Department of Sociology in Jeju National University. Kyunghee Choi is from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. Sangchul Yoon is Professor of the Department of Sociology in Hanshin University

In order to ensure the objectivity and validity of the assessment, a two-track strategy was chosen. First, the experts to be surveyed were chosen on the basis of their ideological affinities. The experts, in other words, were grouped into the conservative (pro-government), moderate, and progressive (anti-government) camps. By revealing the ideological differences of the experts surveyed, the authors of this report hoped to make the assessment more objective. Second, different groups of experts were chosen to assess different fields of analysis. There were three different expert groups for analyzing Korean democracy on three different dimensions: politics, economy, and civil society.

A total of twenty-seven experts were included in this survey. The twenty-seven experts were divided into three groups of nine. Each group included three conservatives, three moderates, and three progressives. All these experts were career academics and activists. More specifically, the assessment of political and economic democracies was assigned to groups of mostly professors and career researchers, while civil activists were entrusted with the assessment of the civil society. The survey took place via e-mail from early June to the end of July 2012.

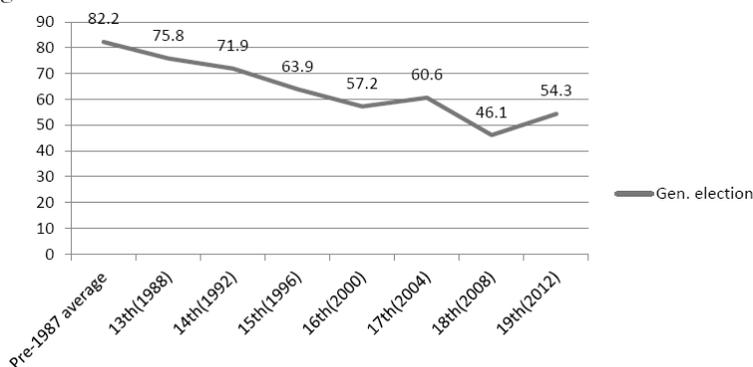
Background Context of Democracy in Korea, 2012

Two major elections were scheduled in Korea in 2012: the nineteenth general election of National Assembly members and the eighteenth presidential election. 2012 was also the last year of President Lee Myung-bak's term. The assessment of the Lee administration's performance over the last five years tends to be more negative than positive. The emphasis it placed on the neoliberal approach to economic development and pragmatism has intensified practices of exclusion across all sectors of Korean society, whether politics, economy, or civil society. Political and administrative power was concentrated in a handful of people who are close to, or share similar backgrounds with President Lee, such as Lee Sang-deuk, who is the President's brother; the alumni of Korea University; his fellow congregants at Somang Church; and people from the southeastern part of Korea known as Yeongnam. The shift to deregulation in the economic sphere has fuelled the concentration of wealth and power in chaebol and multinational conglomerates, further widening the gap between the haves and have-nots. The increasing censorship over online communications and the press has restricted the freedom of expression and weakened the influence of civil society over the government.

The patterns of exclusion and monopolization noted across all the domains of Korean society have made corruption run rampant among the

President's relatives and friends, weakened the macroscopic prospects of the Korean economy, and intensified socioeconomic dichotomization. These phenomena have served a serious blow to President Lee's popularity and accelerated the lame-duck process, threatening his government's ability to do its job. The nineteenth general election, held on April 11, drew a voter turnout of 54.3 percent, which is 8.2 percentage points higher than the turnout for the eighteenth general election (see figure 1). However, the governing party, Saenuri, won a landslide victory, while the opposition forces led by the Democratic United Party lost bitterly.

Figure 1. Voter Turnout Rates Since Democratization



Source: National Election Commission (NEC) 2012.²

As shown in table 1, the Saenuri Party won 127 district seats and twenty-five proportional representative seats, claiming more than one-half of the National Assembly. The Democratic United Party had a strong campaign throughout, but was able to claim only a total of 127 seats in total. The United Progressive Party won thirteen seats, becoming the progressive party with the most seats in Korean history and securing its position as the third major presence in the national legislature. The Liberty Forward Party, a self-proclaimed representative of the Chungcheong region, ended up winning only five seats. The nineteenth election on the whole left the governing party intact and powerful and kept the opposition forces small and fragmented. The protracted conflict between the two factions led the nineteenth National Assembly to convene its first meeting early in August, almost two months after the originally scheduled date on May 30. The infuriating fights within the National Assembly have only served to heighten the public's distrust of the legislative body.

News of rampant corruption among President Lee's relatives and friends started making headlines after the nineteenth general election. The public suffered a radical decline in trust in the Lee administration as a series of its key figures were arrested and indicted for practices of pervasive corruption. These figures included Lee Sang-deuk, a former assemblyman and the president's brother and Choi Shi-jung, the commissioner of Korea Broadcasting and Communication Commission.

Table 1. Number of Seats Won by Each Party in the Nineteenth General Election

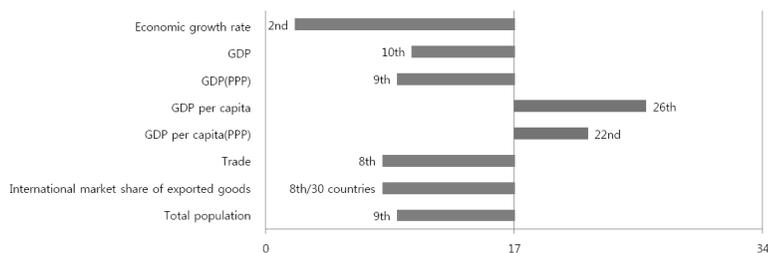
	Saenuri	Un. Dem.	Un. Prog.	Lib. Fwd.	Independent
District	127	106	7	3	3
Prop. Rep.	25	21	6	2	
Total	152	127	13	5	3

Source: NEC 2012.

According to the 2011 Report on National Competitiveness released by the Korean Ministry of Strategy and Finance, South Korea came in tenth among the member states of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in terms of gross domestic product (GDP), eighth in terms of trade, and second in terms of economic growth rates, actual and potential alike. Yet Korea managed to arrive at the twenty-sixth position among the thirty-four member states in terms of GDP per capita. It also topped the list of working hours, with each working Korean working an average of 2,193 hours a year. The Gini coefficient and poverty rate, both indicators of income inequality, placed Korea in the twenty-fourth and twentieth positions, respectively, signifying that Korea is less egalitarian than most of the other OECD states. Korea also came in sixth in terms of the proportion of part-time or contract-based workers in the workforce (19.24 percent), suggesting a severe distortion in its labor market.

In the meantime, broadcasters and members of the press went on a series of strikes in their struggle to secure fairness and objectivity in news reporting. Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), a state-owned television network, saw the most intense and protracted labor strike as the labor union resisted the new president of the corporation appointed by President Lee. As these strikes illustrate, the Korean government has critically incapacitated the press from serving its functions.

Figure 2: Main Indicators of Korea’s Economic Performance



Source: No Cut News 2012.³

Assessment

Index of Democracy in Korea, 2012

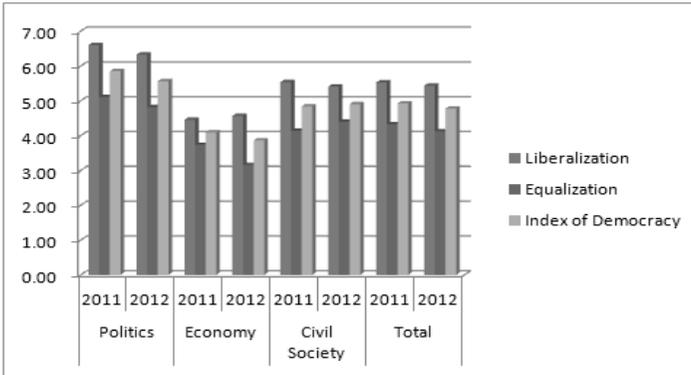
The survey showed that Korea scored 4.78 in the ADI in 2012, lower than the 4.93 it scored in 2011. Breaking down this score revealed that Korea scored highest (5.57) in the political dimension. The country scored 4.81 and 3.87 in the dimensions of civil society and economy, respectively. Table 2 shows how Korea fared in terms of the liberalization and equalization of each field in 2012.

Table 2. Index of Democracy in Korea (2012)

	Politics	Economy	Civil Society	Total
Liberalization	6.33	4.57	5.41	5.44
Equalization	4.82	3.16	4.40	4.13
Index of Democracy	5.57	3.87	4.91	4.78

Among the three fields, Korea scored better in terms of liberalization (5.44), which is underpinned by autonomy and competition, compared to equalization (4.13), which requires pluralization and solidarity. This suggests that the ideal of equality still remains far from being materialized in Korean democracy. In particular, Korea fared most poorly in terms of equalization in the field of economy, reflecting the severe socioeconomic bipolarization in Korean society.

Figure 3. Comparing Liberalization and Equalization Scores (2011-2012)



The liberalization and equalization scores (6.33 and 4.82, respectively) in politics in 2012 were lower than their counterparts in 2011 (6.60 and 5.11, respectively; see figure 3). The decline in the liberalization score reflects a number of factors, including the drop in the guarantee of the right to political participation, from 8.22 in 2011 to 7.11 in 2012; the decline in acceptance of political dissent (by 0.34); and the deteriorating status of the rule of law and electoral fairness. As for equalization, a significant decline was noted in terms of system and degree of participation with a score that dropped from 7 in 2011 to 4.44 in 2012. The level of trust in the legislature and its representatives also dropped, along with the level of trust in democracy. It is the decline in the last indicator that best captures the declining state of the Korean democracy overall.

In the economic sphere, Korea's liberalization score showed a marginal increase between 2011 and 2012, rising from 4.46 to 4.57. Its equalization score, on the contrary, dropped drastically from 3.75 to 3.16. The most significant factor that contributed to this decline is the poor state of pluralization in the Korean economy reflected by the increasing monopolization of wealth and economic inequality. Korea scored poorer than it did last year on the dimensions of pluralization, with the survey respondents agreeing that there is a dramatic increase in income and property inequality. As for solidarity, Korea also saw its scores decline in terms of execution of social security nets and in terms of influence of labor unions on policymaking.

Korea's score on the field of civil society increased slightly between 2011 and 2012, from 4.84 to 4.91. In 2011, Korea's score on the political aspects of civil society was relatively low, while its score on the economic

aspects was relatively high. This pattern suggests that the growth of the power of the Korean civil society has not kept up its pace with the development of procedural democracy. Nevertheless, it also implies that Korean civil society harbors a relatively great potential to lead the substantive development of democracy. The decline in the liberalization of civil society reflects the growing pressure that governmental organizations and the private sector exert on civil society, the weakening roles and capabilities of voluntary and nongovernmental organizations, and the lowering in social acceptance as a whole. The relative rise in the equalization score, on the other hand, reflects an overall improvement in terms of all aspects of equalization except for the inequality of information.

Table 3. Korean Autonomy, Competition, Pluralization, and Solidarity in Three Fields, 2012

	Liberalization		Equalization	
	Autonomy	Competition	Pluralization	Solidarity
Politics	6.97	5.69	4.72	4.91
Economy	5.25	3.89	2.58	3.75
Civil Society	4.94	5.89	4.50	4.30
Mean	5.72	5.15	3.93	4.32

Table 3 shows how Korea scored on the specific properties or sub-principles of liberalization and equalization. As these scores illustrate, Korea tends to score higher on the principle of autonomy, which is one of the elements of liberalization. Korea's scores in terms of competition also remains relatively high in the fields of politics and civil society. The relatively low degree of competition in the economic field reflects generally low degrees of transparency and fairness in corporate management and low levels of accountability in government and corporations. Notwithstanding the march of democracy elsewhere, political-economic alliance and corporate management still remain immune to democratic rules and persist in authoritarian practices.

Korea scored less than average (5.0) in terms of both pluralization and solidarity in the political field, suggesting that the monopolistic exercise of authority still remains the norm in Korea. Korea scored very poorly—2.58 and 3.75, respectively—on pluralization and solidarity in economic equalization. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the score on economic

pluralization, which is a measure of economic exclusion and inequality, plummeted from 3.76 in 2011 to 2.58 in 2012. This suggests a dramatic intensification of economic inequality in Korea over a period of only a year. As for the civil society field, the state of pluralization has generally weakened. In comparison, solidarity has generally increased. In other words, affirmative action, participation in voluntary organizations, and the influence of the civil society on policymaking have all improved. Meanwhile, social inequality and exclusion continue to rise along with their economic counterparts.

Types and Characteristics of Responses

Politics

Korea's democracy index in the field of politics dropped between 2011 and 2012, indicating either the stagnation or the regression of democracy in Korean politics. It is important to understand how Korean politics fared on each of the principles making up democracy. Table 4 shows that Korea's score on autonomy, a factor of liberalization, rose by 0.11 points between 2011 and 2012. At the same time, Korea's scores on competition, another factor of liberalization, and on the subprinciples of equalization, i.e., pluralization and solidarity, declined. The margin of difference in the scores on solidarity (from 5.36 to 4.91) is especially noteworthy.

Table 4. Autonomy, Competition, Pluralization, and Solidarity in Korean Politics, 2011-2012

Year	Autonomy	Competition	Pluralization	Solidarity
2011	6.86	5.83	4.86	5.36
2012	6.97	5.69	4.72	4.91

Some of the major changes noted in Korea's scores between 2011 and 2012 on the four subprinciples that make up political liberalization and equalization were analyzed in detail. (A summary of the changes in rating can be seen in table 5.) On one hand, the autonomy score rose between 2011 and 2012, thanks to the increases in the scores that Korea earned on the political survey's question (Q) 1, Q2, and Q3 (i.e., on items concerning the level of protection afforded to citizens against violence perpetrated by

the state, the guarantee of civil liberties, and the freedom to form and participate in assemblies, respectively). On the other hand, Korea's score under questions like Q4 (acceptance of political dissent) lowered, reflecting the physical coercion to which the Korean state resorted to in curtailing the freedoms of expression and assembly in incidents like the protests against the establishment of a naval base in Jeju, the renegotiation of the Korea-United States Free Trade Agreement, and against the Four Rivers Project. In other words, the scope of civil liberties and political rights Koreans enjoy may have expanded between 2011 and 2012, but the ideological bias of the ruling elite and the rejection of political dissent continue to persist.

Korea's score in Q5 (the protection of citizens' suffrage) also lowered. Although Korea's score under this question was the highest in the previous survey—getting a score of 8.22—it drastically dropped to 7.11 in 2012. The change reflects the perception not of any actual loss of the right to vote and the right to run for office, but of the increasing hardline stance of the government that refuses to hear the public's opinion in policymaking decisions. The lower score on this item, in other words, reflects the single-handed manner in which the Lee administration makes and enforces its policy decisions. This unilateralism seems to render the right to vote and the right to run for office less meaningful. Korea's score under Q7 (concentration of power in the nonelected elite) is also lower, mainly due to the public perception that Lee Sang-deuk, the president's brother, had unduly meddled with governance by virtue of blood ties. Korea's scores under Q8 and Q9 (the rule of law and electoral fairness, respectively), were also lower. Thus, Korean democracy still lacks the institutional preconditions that Robert Dahl has pointed out as necessary for democracy (1998).

As for pluralization, a principle of equalization, Korea scored higher in 2012 than it did in 2011 under Q12 and Q14 (dispersion of power in the parliament and the democratization of state institutions, respectively). Yet its score plummeted from 4.78 to 3.89 under Q13 (political representativeness). Koreans, in other words, perceive the legislative body not as an assembly adequately reflecting the diverse values and interests of the public, but as a body catering to the needs and demands of only certain powerful groups. A key problem lies in the electoral arrangement that decides the form and shape of the legislature. Korea has a mixed-member majoritarian system under which the first-past-the-post winner has a greater number of seats to give out than the number of proportional representative seats. This distorts the representation of interests and demands in the legislature, and is responsible for the declining level of public trust in it.

Table 5. Indicators of Democracy in Korean Politics, 2011-2012

		Attribute	Indicator / Question	2011	2012	
Principles	Autonomy	▷ The level of the performance of state violence	1. How well do you think the citizens are protected from the violence wielded by government agencies in your country?	6.56	6.89	
		▷ Civil rights	2. How well do you think the citizens' freedom is protected in your country?	7.22	7.33	
		▷ Freedom to organize and act in political groups	3. How much do you think the freedom of assembly and activities of political groups (parties and quasi-political organizations) are protected in your country?	7.11	7.44	
		▷ Permission for political opposition	4. How much do you think the opposition movements to the government or governing groups and the governing ideology are allowed in your country?	6.56	6.22	
	Liberalization	▷ The expansion of the universal suffrage	5. How well do you think suffrage of the citizens is protected in your country?	8.22	7.11	
		▷ Efficiency of the state	6. How well do you think all government agencies implement government policies in your country?	4.33	5.00	
		Competition	▷ The presence of the non-elected hereditary power	7. How much do you think non-elected groups account for the political power in your country?	4.00	3.78
			▷ The rule under the laws	8. How well do you think the rule of law is established in your country?	5.33	5.22
			▷ Electoral fairness	9. How fairly do you think elections are conducted in your country?	7.78	7.67
			▷ Transparency	10. How transparent do you think the operations of government agencies are in your country?	5.33	5.33

.....

Table 5 (*continued*)

		Attribute	Indicator / Question	2011	2012
Principles	Pluralization	▷ Independence and checks and balances between state power apparatuses	11. How well do you think government agencies maintain checks and balance?	5.11	5.11
		▷ Dispersion of political power in the parliament	12. How well do you think the power within the legislature is distributed in your country?	4.78	5.00
		▷ Political representation	13. How well do you think the Parliament or the legislature represent various social groups in your country?	4.78	3.89
	Equalization	▷ Democratization of state institutions	14. How fairly and rationally do you think government agencies are being implemented in your country?	4.78	4.89
		▷ Participation system and degree of participation	15. How actively do you think citizens are participating in elections and other political decision making processes in your country?	7.00	4.44
		Solidarity	▷ Affirmative action	16. How well do you think affirmative actions are established and implemented in your country?	4.33
	▷ The public credibility of the current democratic institution		17. How much do you think the public trust the government?	4.00	4.67
			18. How much do you think the public trust the Parliament/ Legislature?	4.11	3.78
			19. How much do you think the public trust Democracy?	7.33	7.22

As for solidarity, Korea scored better in 2012 than it did in 2011 under Q16 and Q17 (i.e., affirmative action for the marginalized and citizens' trust in democracy as a system, respectively). Yet Korea's score plummeted by the biggest margin on the level or degree of participation, from 7.00 in 2011 to 4.44 in 2012. The drop reflects the increasing censorship over political dissent, the increasing limitation on the routes of access to policymaking, the single-handed and dogmatic hostile stance of the Lee administration on communication, and the declining representativeness of the legislature. The citizens' distrust in the legislature is also evident in Korea's low score under Q18, as the National Assembly increasingly serves as an arena of uncompromising fights over factional interests, thus

failing to serve its function in engaging and satisfying the public interests through policymaking.

In summary, political democracy, as defined by Dahl, remains intact and active in Korea along with increasing political participation and electoral competition. Yet it fails to carry adequate representativeness and accountability. According to experts, this “unreactive” democracy continues to dismay and frustrate the Korean public.

Economy

In 2012, same as in 2011, Korea performed poorly in the economic field, with its overall score dropping from 4.10 to 3.87. While Korea’s performance somewhat improved on the subprinciples of liberalization, its performance on the subprinciples of equalization significantly deteriorated. In other words, Koreans are most dissatisfied with the state of democracy in their economy. Increasing levels of economic inequality continues to obstruct the task of consolidating democracy in Korea.

Table 6 shows Korea’s scores on liberalization and equalization in the economic field. The significant drop in the overall score on the economic field reflects the greater margin by which Korea’s equalization score fell (from 3.71 to 3.17) than the margin by which its liberalization score rose (from 4.46 to 4.51). The decline in economic democracy suggests that Koreans have begun to feel the specific and actual effects of increasing economic inequality. A more detailed comparison of the 2011 and 2012 ratings can be seen in table 7.

Table 6. Autonomy, Competition, Pluralization, and Solidarity in the Korean Economy, 2011-2012

Year	Autonomy	Competition	Pluralization	Solidarity
2011	5.19	3.72	3.78	3.65
2012	5.14	3.89	2.58	3.75

Korea’s score on economic autonomy (Q4) has drastically decreased from 5.89 in 2011 to 5.22 in 2012, reflecting the increasing influence of foreign countries and foreign capital on the Korean economy. The Environment and Labor Committee in the National Assembly held a hearing on September 20, 2012 over the exhausting strike of workers of the Ssangyong Motor Company. The hearing served to reveal the depth

and magnitude of social disturbances that the increasing power of foreign capital could wring. The hearing unearthed the fact that, in drafting the accounting documents for Ssangyong—upon request by Shanghai Automobile—a major accounting firm in Korea charged with the task deliberately underappraised the values of the company's tangible assets so as to support the withdrawal of its business operations and justify structural readjustment. When Shanghai Automobile, Ssangyong's largest shareholder, withdrew from Ssangyong in 2009, the highest priority for Korea Development Bank and the Korean government, as Ssangyong's second-largest shareholder, was to find another buyer as soon as possible to normalize management. While the labor union continued to negotiate with the legal manager over the scope of structural readjustment, the police began to quell union activists with force, destroying any willingness in union members to continue negotiations. The brutal ways the police dealt with the strike that went on for seventy-six days were broadcasted and reported worldwide. The incident culminated in the "voluntary" resignation by 2,026 employees, the unpaid leaves of 461 employees, and the dismissal of 159 employees. The result, in turn, led to the suicide of some two dozen laid-off workers and their family members. The Ssangyong strike vividly illustrates how transnational capital could threaten a democratic state.

Notwithstanding the Lee administration's anti-union policy, Korea scored higher under Q2 (protection of the right to work) in 2012 than it did in 2011. This reflects a shift in the administration's policy from exclusion only to the maintaining of the status quo. The Hope Bus Campaigns, launched in 2011 response to the occupation of Crane No. 85 on the site of the Yeongdo Plant of Hanjin Heavy Industries by Kim Jin-suk, a senior executive of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, helped to raise the public's awareness and criticism of layoffs. In September and December of the same year, the Chungnam District Labor Committee and the Busan District Labor Committee, respectively, ruled Hyundai Motor Company's dismissal of its subcontracted workers as illegal. In February 2012, the Supreme Court also ruled that the company had illegally hired internal subcontractors, hinting at a possible new resolve of the judiciary to brake indiscriminate hiring of contract-based workers in Korea.

Yet Korea's score dropped with respect to competition, bespeaking the persistence of unfairness in corporate competition. The relations between conglomerates and smaller companies and between super chain stores and smaller local markets and vendors still remain unfair by and large. The widening gap between conglomerates and smaller companies testifies that the Lee administration's flagrantly pro-business, neoliberal

economic policy did not have the trickle-down effect it seemed to promise. Although the administration sought to tackle this problem by organizing the Mutual Growth Committee in December 2012, its first chairman, Jeong Un-chan, stepped down in March 2012, exhorting the government and the business community to outgrow their authoritarian paradigm. His resignation made the unfair practices perpetrated by conglomerates a “hot issue” in public debates and made “economic democratization” the central keyword in the presidential election campaigns of 2012.

Table 7. Indicators of Democracy in the Korean Economy, 2012

		Attribute	Indicator / Question	2011	2012
Principles	Autonomy	▷ Freedom/ autonomy of	1. How much influence do you think the political power/elite have on the economic activities operation of private companies in your country without political intervention?	4.78	5.22
		▷ Protection of basic labor rights	2. How well do you think labor rights are established in your country?	4.33	4.89
			3. How well do you think the prohibition of forced labor and child labor is observed in your country?	5.78	5.67
		▷ Autonomy of decision making in the policy of the international political economy	4. How independent do you think decision making processes of the central government is from foreign countries and/or foreign capital in your country?	5.89	5.22
	Liberalization	▷ Economic transparency	5. How transparent do you think the corporate operations are in your country?	4.22	4.33
		▷ Economic fairness	6. How fair do you think the competition between companies is in your country?	3.67	3.44
		▷ Government's accountability	7. How much effort do you think the government is exerting to protect and guarantee labor rights in your country?	3.56	4.11
		▷ Corporate accountability	8. How well do you think private companies protect/ guarantee labor rights in your country?	3.44	3.67

.....

Table 7 (continued)

		Attribute	Indicator / Question	2011	2012
Principles	Pluralization	▷ Economic monopoly	9. How much do you think the economy is dominated by certain groups in your country?	3.13	2.78
		▷ Regional inequality	10. How serious do you think the economic disparities/ inequality are between regions in your country?	4.67	3.22
		▷ Inequality of income	11. How serious do you think the income disparity is in your country?	4.22	2.11
		▷ Inequality of asset	12. How serious do you think the asset disparity is in your country?	3.00	1.89
		▷ Inequality of employment	13. How serious do you think discrimination is in the labor market in your country?	3.78	2.89
	Equalization	▷ The social security system	14. How well do you think support systems for the poor are working in your country?	4.56	4.22
			15. How well do you think the social insurance programs are operated in your country?	4.89	5.22
		▷ The activity of trade unions	16. How well-organized do you think labor unions are in your country?	3.11	3.33
		Solidarity	17. How much influence do you think labor unions have on the policies of the central government in your country?	4.00	3.67
			18. How much do you think labor unions participate in the management process in your country?	2.11	2.11
Solidarity	▷ Corporate watch	19. How well do you think public monitoring is carried out on the corporate activities in your country?	3.44	3.89	
	▷ Awareness of reducing inequality	20. How enthusiastic do you think the general public is about improving the economic inequality in your country?	3.88	3.78	

Korea's poor performance was especially prominent based on the responses to all questions under economic pluralization, i.e., on economic monopolization, regional disparities, income inequality, property inequality, and employment inequality. Especially worrisome is Korea's deteriorating performance as regards income inequality and property inequality. This

indicates the intensification and structuralization of socioeconomic dichotomization in Korea. Monopolization is especially evident in the excessive economic power of chaebol, while pervasive property inequality is apparent in the distorted distribution of house and property ownership.

Korea scored 3.75 in economic solidarity in 2012, which is slightly higher than its score on the same subprinciple in 2011. Yet the score on the social security system dropped due to the growth-centered economic policy of the Lee administration. Another key indicator of Korea's worsening economic democracy is the weakening influence of labor unions on the central government's policymaking. This suggests that the policy of withholding salaries from full-time union members (in effect since July 2010) and the policy of fostering multiple unions—with a single window of communication—on each business site have effectively undermined labor activism in Korea.

Civil Society

If we grant that civil society is the source of impetus for the progress of democracy, the Korean one shows both failures and signs of hope. The democratic potential of Korean civil society is affirmed in the relative increase in the scores of the civil society component of the 2012 ADI survey. Although the overall score of Korea's democracy dropped between 2011 and 2012, the scores on the civil society field showed some improvements, suggesting an increase in activism and the vitality of civil movements.

Although Korea scored higher in 2012 than it did in 2011 under almost all questions concerning civil society, it did show a slight decrease in its liberalization score and a relatively significant increase in its equalization score. An analysis of the factors of this difference is herein provided.

Table 8 shows that while Korea's score on autonomy has dropped significantly, its score on competition has risen by comparison. Autonomy in this context refers to the independence of the civil society from the state and economy. Similarly, Korea's score on pluralization has somewhat decreased. Meanwhile, its score in solidarity has increased dramatically. The low score on pluralization stems from the rapidly changing perception of the information gap. The high score on solidarity, meanwhile, reflects a favorable assessment of the influence that nongovernmental organizations wield on policy decisions. These two scores also seem to reflect the influence of the elections. The increasing influence of social network services on

politics and the election of Park Won-sun to the mayoralty of Seoul appear to have induced these changes.

As can be seen in table 9, the most noteworthy factor of pluralization is the information gap. This factor received a score of 7.22 in 2011 and 4.33 in 2012. It is the factor subjected to the greatest margin of decline, which is all the more remarkable because all the other factors of pluralization received higher scores in 2012 than they did in 2011. It was this drastic fall in the information gap score that has served to bring down the overall pluralization score. Accounting for this fall is the explosive sway that social network services have come to wield in the recent elections. Korea is one of the countries in the world with the widest distribution of high-speed internet connections, thus the digital divide across class or generational lines is relatively small in this country. The by-election for mayoralty in Seoul in October 2011 has abruptly increased the role that the internet and social service networks play in the popular perception. As the youth rush excessively to online sources for news reports and opinions on the process leading to the general election in 2012, intergenerational conflict began to converge with the digital divide and the population is now divided between those who actively use online networking and those who do not. This digital divide along generational lines has begun to take on an increasingly acute form, intensifying the negative perception of the information gap.

Interestingly, a similar downward pattern is noted in the scores on autonomy as well. While the score on the basic autonomy of members of civil society (i.e., the basic human development and the satisfaction of basic needs) somewhat rose between 2011 and 2012, the scores on the pressure from pro-government organizations, the influence of corporations, and citizens' willingness for toleration plummeted.

Table 8. Autonomy, Competition, Pluralization and Solidarity in Korean Civil Society, 2012

Year	Autonomy	Competition	Pluralization	Solidarity
2011	5.30	5.78	4.69	3.59
2012	4.94	5.89	4.50	4.30

Table 9. Index of Democracy in Korean Civil Society, 2011-2012

		Attribute	Question / Indicator	2011	2012
Principles	Liberalization	▷ Autonomy of society from state intervention	1. How free do you think citizens' social activities are from government interference in your country?	4.33	5.00
			2. How much influence do you think government organizations have on society in your country?	6.11	4.11
		▷ Autonomy of society from the market	3. How much do you think private companies have influence on society in your country?	6.00	3.56
		Autonomy (basic needs and basic human development level)	4. How much do you think citizens' basic needs are met in your country?	5.67	5.89
			5. Aside from the basic needs stated in question no. 4, how much do you think special care is provided for vulnerable people or minorities, such as children, women, people with disabilities, and immigrants in your country?	4.11	4.67
			6. How much do you think citizens are provided with education opportunities in your country?	5.78	6.67
		▷ Tolerance	7. How much do you think citizens respect different cultures, religions, languages, races, nations, and ideas in your country?	5.11	4.67
	Competition	▷ Capability of voluntary association	8. How much influence do you think NGOs have on society in your country?	5.56	5.33
		▷ Public good of voluntary association	9. How well do you think NGOs represent public interest in your country?	6.56	6.56
		▷ Transparency of voluntary association	10. Do you think NGOs are democratically operating in your country?	5.22	6.11
		▷ Diversity of voluntary associations	11. Do you think NGOs well represent different values and demands of society in your country?	5.78	5.56

.....

Table 9 (*continued*)

		Attribute	Question / Indicator	2011	2012	
Principles	Pluralization	▷ Inequality of public spheres	12. Do you think the media is fair and just in your country?	2.75	3.78	
		▷ Inequality of culture and information	13. How wide do you think the information gap between citizens is in your country?	7.22	4.33	
		▷ Inequality of interest relations	14. Do you think citizens have equal access to cultural facilities and activities in your country?	4.67	5.11	
		▷ Inequality of power	15. How equally do you think power is distributed among people in your country?	4.11	4.78	
	Equalization	▷ Institutional guarantee of diversity and affirmative actions	16. Do you think affirmative actions are well established and operated in your country?	3.11	3.89	
		Solidarity	▷ Participation and support of social groups	17. How actively do you think citizens are participating in NGO activities in your country?	3.89	4.00
			▷ Governance of the state and civil society	18. How much influence do you think NGOs have on government's policy making processes in your country?	3.78	5.00

Why did these score changes happen? First, conservative associations and organizations that began to crop up under the previous Roh Moo-hyun administration are now wielding considerable influence on civil society at large in active interaction with the conservative Lee administration. Yet according to the 2012 survey, a series of corruption scandals involving these organizations and their key members reflected badly on the nature of their power. Second, the score on the influence of corporations also dropped because the Lee administration's pro-business policy continues to deepen the sense of relative deprivation among ordinary people. This sense of relative deprivation has gotten to a worrying point that even the Lee administration has launched campaigns on fair society and mutual growth. Third, the score on citizens' willingness for tolerance has also dropped significantly due to the extremely hostile behavior of conservative organizations and associations that surfaced during the local and general elections. Accompanying the increasing activism of these conservative groups was the explosive popularity that the internet radio show called *Nakkomsu* is enjoying among the more progressively oriented.

The scores on almost all indicators of solidarity increased, leaving room for diverse interpretations. The chief of these interpretations is the positive influence wielded by the election of Park Won-sun to the mayoralty of Seoul. Park is a noted activist and an advocate who is known for advocating for the powerless. The endorsement from Professor Ahn Cheol-su, who himself briefly ran for the mayoral office and represents the voice of the less politicized and non-elite moderate voters in urban areas, played a decisive role in Park's victory in an election that centered on whether or not to give free lunches to schoolchildren. These developments seem to have improved the scores on affirmative action and the influence of nongovernmental organizations.

Evaluation

The 2012 ADI Survey in Korea supports the following conclusions. First, the relationship between liberalization and equalization, the two main pillars of the ADI, remains more or less unchanged, with Korea scoring better on the former than the latter. This suggests that democracy is still by and large formal and procedural in Korea and has yet to make a progress into a more non-exclusive version. Democracy in Korea, in other words, is still shackled by exclusive and monopolistic practices in the fields of politics, economy, and civil society, with wealth and power concentrated in a few who are not subjected to effective checks and balances.

Second, the sizable gaps among the scores in politics, economy, and civil society reflect the fact that while the institutionalization of democracy is proceeding relatively uninterrupted in Korean politics, democracy has until now failed to make itself the norm in the spheres of economic and social activities. Korea, in other words, needs to reinforce its capability for socioeconomic democracy for the consolidation of its democratic system and culture.

Third, the decline in Korea's overall democracy score between 2011 and 2012 demonstrates that the development of democratic procedures and forms in politics is not sufficient to offset the so-called "democratic deficit" underpinned by the increasing restrictions on civil liberties, the absence of checks and balances among state institutions, and the dearth of accountability (Schedler 2006). Against the backdrop of the single-handed and authoritarian approach taken by the Lee administration, the deterioration of horizontal and vertical accountability, and the increasing concentration of economic and political power, politics of reconciliation and compromise has dissipated, leading to the current infirm state of Korean democracy.

Given all the symptoms, Korea's democracy can best be described as merely delegative (O'Donnell 1994).

Consolidation of democracy in Korea requires strong guarantees of basic civil rights in politics, economy, and civil society, as well as dispersion of power. Fair distribution of resources for power, in turn, requires economic democratization and the empowerment of civil society as the engine of democracy. Institutional measures are also needed to mitigate political inequality stemming from socioeconomic bipolarization.

Note

1. See CADI (2012) for the composition and structure of the ADI.
2. The data in figure 1 and table 1 were taken from the Election Statistics System available at the website of the National Election Commission (<http://info.nec.go.kr/main/>), retrieved on August 11, 2012.
3. Data taken from the website of *No Cut News* (<http://www.nocutnews.co.kr/news/905015>), accessed January 4, 2012.

References

- CADI (Consortium for the Asian Democracy Index). 2012. "The Asian Democracy Index: A Guide." *Asian Democracy Review* 1:36-87.
- Dahl, Robert. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- _____. 1998. *On Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- O'Donnell, Guillermo. 1994. "Delegative Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 5(1):55-69.
- Schedler, Andreas ed. 2006. *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.