

# The Rise of Nationalism among South Korean Youth and Democracy: An Analysis

Noor Sulastry Yurni Ahmad, Ki-Soo Eun

**Abstract**—The 2008 Candlelight Protests of Korea was very significant to portray the political environment among the South Korean youth. Many challenges and new advanced technologies have driven the youth community to be engaged in the political arena that has shifted them from traditional Korean youth to a very greater community. Due to historical perspective with the people of North Korea, the young generation has embraced different view of ethnic nationalism. This study examines the youth involvement in politics in line with their level of acceptance the practice of democracy. The increase usage of new media has shown great results in the survey results whereby the youth used as a platform to gain political information and brought higher degree of their sociopolitical interests among them. Furthermore, the rise of nationalism and patriotism will be discussed in this paper to the dynamism of the political approaches used by the Korea government

**Keywords**—Nationalism, new media, political participation, youth

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE history of the economic development of South Korea is evidence of the country's ability to move forward. South Korea was more impoverished compared to Malaysia in the 1960s, still reeling from the Korean War. It possessed no natural resources, such as timber, tin, or oil. Their only source of wealth was their diligent, educated youths. The economic plan that transformed the face of South Korea also began with the production of cheap electronic goods, before shifting to production of high-quality goods in the 1980s, and the citizens registered a fourfold rise in income between 1987 and 1990. South Korea has its own automobile industry namely Hyundai, which began in the late '70s became and still today's a global top brand.

Hence, South Korea was one of the "economic tigers of Asia". Apart from good economic development, its democratic development is also commendable.

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Lee Kuan Yew, the former Singapore Prime Minister while speaking in the Philippines - once said that the problem of the Philippines was too much democracy, and this led to a stagnant economy. "Asian values" was a term often used by people like Lee Kuan Yew growth. In fact, economic development in South Korea coincided with the growth of democratic values. LG, Samsung, Kia, and Hyundai, are the examples of the famous Korean products worldwide. South Korea's international branding and the economic growth proven the great effort of the government to impose the economic policy. Social capital is considered one of the most important ingredients for achieving stable democracy and a successful economy [1]-[9]. While Coleman and Bourdieu emphasized functional and instrumental aspects of social capital, Putnam discusses its impacts on collective actions, political participation, and democracy. This paper defines social capital as multiple human resources networks, either actual or potential, with certain characteristics of shared norms, values, attitudes, and trust built through prior collective action that can be utilized for future social and political mobilizations. This leads to the South Korea's success which due to the struggle of the people who loved their country. The nationalistic spirit inculcated from primary school shaped the South Koreans into a diligent people. Even though they were conquered by Japan for so long, today South Korea rose and is now equal to their former coloniser.

Nationalism is a natural reaction of conquered nations. It began peacefully, with the people showing their love to their nation. Nationalism could be defined as a love for a country in forming a nation-state. In other words, nationalism is a group loyalty sentiment based on a same cultural institution to form unity, by the formation of a free state. The emergence of this nationalist spirit is due to the realisation that ultimate freedom did not lie with their conquerors, but with themselves: or in other words, freedom. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, nationalism began to emerge in Asia. The term nationalism is linked to two matters: citizenship demanding for political unity and independent sovereignty, as well as a patriotic sentiment of loyalty to the nation. Nationalism also meant loyal sentiment or sympathy that binds the community through a common institution and culture to form unity among them, and to further form a free state.

The voice of the youths, mostly students in South Korea, showed an impressive increase since long. In the West, students and youths became an important group in protesting against the imperialistic designs of the US in Vietnam. Furthermore, as witnessed by the world in the 1960s, this group was the conscience of the people, who condemned the excesses practice of the capitalist system. The voice of the youths in South Korea could be seen from the Kwangju incident in the early 1980s, where more than 200 students

were killed. The students of South Korea have long become an energetic force in the country. They led the protest against Japanese imperialism and Syngman Rhee, which is considered as an American puppet. The leftist *Hangchongnyon* took control of Yongsei University in Seoul in 1996, and resulted to the arrest of 5,000 students during this event.

The involvement of the youth in politics in South Korea today showed a positive development. The inclination of the younger generation in openly discussing political matters was set since they were eligible to register as voters as early as 19 years (it was raised to 20 years during the presidential election in 2007). Even developed countries such as the United States requested for an amendment to decrease the voting age in the federal level from 21 to 18 years. This is done because those within the 18 to 24 years old are working and paying taxes, and automatically this qualified their status as voters. Countries such as Brazil and Nicaragua allowed people as young as 16 years old to vote. The electoral records of the countries aforementioned have youths as young as 15 and 16 years involved in the voting process. This proved the government of the countries have trust in the younger generation to decide on the path of the country's political system.

Furthermore, democracy also brought a change in government policy and shaped a new nationalist spirit among the people and youths in South Korea. The victory of the progressiveness in 1998, and the introduction of the Sunshine Policy by President Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun brought a new approach to the North Korean question. North Korea, previously considered the main enemy of the South during the autocratic and conservative regimes, is now considered a long-lost brother, and relations between the two countries thawed. It greatly affected the youths, who adopted are more sympathetic view of their Northern neighbours and stressed on the common "Korean" traits of the two. This also led to an increase in anti-American sentiments among the youths, especially when US President George W Bush's statement labelling North Korea as a part of the 'Axis of Evil'. This essay tries to elaborate the defined Korean youth nationalism and the cultural dynamism of today's Korean youth that bring to their political participation demands. This article is referring the Korean youth to young adult Koreans above age 19 and under age 30. The voting age was amended from 20 to 19 [10]. This group of young generation always was the major attention of tracking their tendencies of demands for equality, human rights and recognition from the government. Their life experience brings comprehensive analysis on looking towards their interests in the current political situation, which will lead to their nationalistic approach. Last but not least, the impact and demand of the advance information technology and the usage of new social media will be discussed as one of the factors leading the political interests among the youth community.

## II. YOUNG KOREANS OR THE KOREAN YOUTH: THE HIDDEN PERSONALITY?

A research and advisory company, The Economist Intelligence Unit affiliated with the Economist Group, released its latest Democracy index report for 2010, South Korea ranked 20<sup>th</sup> with an overall score of 8.11 an eight-place jump over its 28<sup>th</sup> place ranking in 2008. This involves an overview of the state of democracy worldwide based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, government functioning, political participation and political culture. South Korea was considered a "full democracy" along with only 26 other countries (representing 12% of the entire population) out of the 167 nations covered by the index (<http://korea.net/news.do?>). This index shows that South Korea successfully graded as one of the Asian countries, which practices democracy in their political environment and the community satisfied with the government administration.

The contemporary young Koreans were brought up under an affluent and democratized society. They were so proud of their Korean nationality, they also embrace their ethnic nationalism in two dimensions: on the one hand, assertive nationalism to the world and toward the United States in particular, and on the other hand, inter-Korean nationalism with the people of North Korea. The younger Koreans prefer peaceful coexistence with North Korea with no memories of war and less fear of the communist North. They are pressing for reforms to make the nation a consolidated democracy, domestically. Nevertheless, the political activism of this vibrant generation is limited, driven by selective events. Its immediate interests are largely cultural and pragmatic [11].

This article will discuss the different category of young Koreans that is considered according to their political category, whereby experts tend to extend the definition of youth to include the age cohort between 30 and 34. In this article, however, the statistical data on Korean youth mostly cover those between 19 or 20 and 29. It is noted Koreans who are in their 20s today were born between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s, most often as one of two children in their family or as an only child. Their parents, who have benefited from Korea's economic boom, are willing to support them financially so that they can reap the benefits of studying at a prestigious college. They reached the adolescence in a rapidly democratizing society, with no experience of the authoritarian past. For this young generation, political freedom is a given. According to Lee, their siblings' or parents' struggle for democratization is nothing but distant "history"[12].<sup>1</sup>

The so-called young generation, both the middle-aged and the older generations of Koreans have lived quite different lives [13]. Members of the so-called "3-8-6 generation" was coined to describe those who were born during the 1960s who spent their rebellious youths under the authoritarian regime of

<sup>1</sup> In their daily lives, they fully embrace freedom of expression and choices. They also live in an Americanized mass culture that extends to food, fashion, entertainment, and other aspects of daily life. The young must demonstrate their command of English in schools, where this is one of the most important subjects, and when seeking employment, as this is an important qualification.

Chung Doo-hwan in the 1980s, and turned 30 during the 1990s, now make up the cohort of those between their mid-30s and mid-40s. In the first place, younger South Koreans are more assertive than their predecessors [14], [15]. This is a generation proud of South Korea's achievements, especially the rapid economic transformation that has propelled the country from nowhere in the aftermath of the Korean War to the eleventh largest economy in the world, with a per capita income of over US\$12,000 and a member of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This generation also takes pride in the country's democracy [16]. As a result of these achievements and other factors, the younger generations in Korea perceive the U.S.-ROK alliance as unequal. Moreover, things become more complicated if one considers the prevalence of the negative image of the U.S. among the country's youth. As Sook-jong Lee points out, "the negative image of the U.S. held by younger South Koreans seems to be behind the South Koreans' confidence in demanding equal partnership in the alliance with the U.S". In effect, the younger generations are behind the growing demand for a more assertive foreign policy[17]. As already pointed out above, Roh Moo-hyun's emphasis on South Korean autonomy vis-à-vis the United States attracted the attention of young voters during the 2002 presidential campaigns [18]. Consequently, they voted overwhelmingly for Roh in the election. Roh elected in the election placed the voice of the young generation to play their role through the Roh's administration policy. In the wake of this development, politicians became more attentive to the concerns of the younger generation, which in turn has influenced the Roh government's foreign policy. The other policy implication of the increasing political importance of South Korean youth relates to inter-Korean relations. The youth of the South have a predominantly progressive orientation and they tend to be more sympathetic to North Korea and to support policies with less emphasis on reciprocity and more emphasis on economic aid [19]-[20]. Progressives no longer see North Korea as a major threat but as a poor kindred spirit in need of assistance [21]. Moreover, a majority of people in the progressive camp subscribes to inter-Korean nationalism among the youth. The younger the person is, the more likely that he or she claims to be progressive. Even though they considered themselves as progressive youth and conservative youth, based on the *Joong Ang* Daily poll in 2003, 45.5 per cent of Koreans in their 20s think they are progressive, while 21.0 per cent identify themselves as conservatives, but with regards to older Koreans, 43.1 per cent identify themselves as conservatives and 22.9 per cent, as progressives [22]. Thus, as part of the progressives in the country, South Korean young people favor not only inter-Korean rapprochement, but also support for their country's domestic reform and autonomous foreign policy[23]. The poll plays significant image portraying the young generation on how they place the political interest nowadays. The difference between the young who claims they were progressive and conservative has the awareness on the importance of this matter. Furthermore, the policy pursued by Kim Dae-jung in particular, has increased the tendency of the

youth to favor inter-Korean cooperation [24]. The "Sunshine Policy" of the Kim administration, which actively engaged North Korea and has continued under Roh government, is dramatically transforming South Koreans' perception of North Korea. According to Sook-Jong Lee and other scholars, the inter-Korean summit between Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-il in June 2000 was a watershed event, transforming Cold War perceptions toward North Korea into something fundamentally different. Currently, many youth of South Korea tend to view North Korea more favorably than in the past, [25]. North Korea is increasingly seen as legitimate partner for peaceful coexistence, rather than an aggressive enemy to be deterred [26]. The spirit of neighborhood among the youth binds North and South Korea relationship and ignoring the memories slowly. This change in threat perception associated with inter-Korean nationalism has taken hold in the hearts of many younger Koreans [27]. They perceive North Korea as a "poor brother" whom they should assist, rather than a threat, which makes them even more critical of U.S. foreign policy[28]. With respect to this issue, Sook-Jong Lee contends that, "One visible corollary to inter-Korean nationalism among South Korean youths is their increasing suspicion of U.S. motives and intervention in the Korean peninsula". Unlike their predecessors in the 50s and 60s, the youth of the South Korea favor inter-Korean cooperation [29]. However, the 3-8-6 age cohort led the radical student movement to oppose Chun Doo-hwan's rule, which was a ROK army general and contributed to the successful democratic transition in 1987. This urges the most progressive age cohort was born. The sense of empowerment that young people felt during the democratic transition has carried on to the current Korean government's reform drive, in which a significant number of activists from this age cohort are participating.

However, the older generation experienced different way of life and they have to struggle through the poverty life. The South Koreans who are 60 and over represent a generation that survived the turbulent circumstances of colonial rule, the post-independence chaos of the late 1940s and the peak of Korean war.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, today's new generation of the Korean youths extremely different from these two groups of people, the 3-8-6 age cohort generation and the older generation.<sup>3</sup> The youth

<sup>2</sup> This group of community harboring strong anti-communist sentiments, they are very suspicious of North Korea. They also supported the democratic student uprising that toppled the authoritarian Syngman Rhee government in 1960. The older generation soon acquiesced in Park Chung-hee's 17 yearlong presidencies, which produced the "economic miracle" but restricted political freedom. Because of its memories of political upheaval and poverty, this generation instinctively values order and stability [10].

<sup>3</sup> The 3-8-6 Generation has been labeled in the 1990s, the 3-8-6 Generation includes a 3 to represent that they were primarily in their thirties, and 8 to represent that they were college students in the 1980s, and a 6 to show that they were born before the Internet era in the 1960s. Today, the 386 Generation of activists includes college graduates in their late thirties and into their early forties. This generation played a pivotal role in a series of anti-authoritarian democratic movements that culminated in the collapse of the South Korean military regime in 1987. The events leading up to the collapse of the authoritarian regime solidified the political cohesion of the 386 Generation and shifted the Confucian state-society relations epitomized by a domineering state and a submissive civil society. The 386 Generation formed networks of

were labeled as the “fast” and “cyber community” generation who has the passion on the electronic gadgets as part of their life. The survey conducted by the National Internet Development Agency of Korea in year 2010 show that almost 100% of the younger population, the teens (99.9%), the 20s (99.9%) and the 30s (99.3%) are Internet users, while the Internet usage rates of the 40s (87.3%) and those aged 30s (85.5%) are more than 80%. Compared to 2009, the Internet usage rates of the 50s (55.2%) and the 60s (33.8%) show relatively higher increase at 2.9% and 2.4%, respectively. The number of Internet users is estimated at 8,040 thousand for the 30s, 7,310 thousand for the 40s, 6,820 thousand for the 20s, 6,570 thousand for the teens, and 3,700 thousand for the 50s.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, they constantly call and send text messages through their mobile phones. The telecommunication provider in the mobile phone purchased provided the Internet access. With the advanced infrastructure of information technology in Korea, this allows the youth generation to make global networking with other communities from the other side of the world. They became very busy in their daily life and hunt for information and data to keep updated with everything that give full satisfaction in their lives.

The existence of the other generation, which is called as The 2030 Generation, plays significant role to the new political paradigm. They were referred as the young people in twenties and early thirties whose political memories were forged after the South Korean military dictatorship fell in the 1980s. They grew up with democracy. According to Han, before year 2002, The 2030 Generation was oriented toward rampant individualism. Some scholars argued that it was technologically wired and demonstrated an indifferent behavior toward politics [30]. However, it is stated that the political consciousness among the 2030 Generations has inclined due to the impressive growth of information technologies infrastructure in the country. This group of young generations has subsequently added up the diversity fragmentation of examining their interests in politics.

The ‘fast’ generation as mentioned earlier was very keen to be the most politically adventurous than the older generation and the 3-8-6-age cohort generation. They were very pragmatic and responded very well because of their driven by the massive materialistic mass culture. Nationalistic, a term used to describe this age group gives very significant impact to the community, as they are more responsive to cultural signs and symbols rather than political slogans. Even though they prefer the cultural way of life, this does not mean we can measure the level of political activeness of the youth

democratic forces including students, labor unions, and civic organizations. Their political militancy was a byproduct of the democratization movement and the subsequent liberalization of political culture in the 1980s. In other words, their generational cohesion was forged in the fight for democracy. The 386 Generation epitomizes the formation of generational political cohesion caused by major events or crises and represents how social mobilization was conventionally accomplished without the use of New Networked Information Technologies (NNIT's) [1].

<sup>4</sup> National Internet Development Agency of Korea, 2010 Internet Survey. 10 October 2011, <http://isis.kisa.or.kr/eng/board/pageId=040100&bbsId=10&itemId=315>.

generation as a whole. The Candle Light protest in 2002, for instance placed an important event to show their political activeness and however, they were basically event-driven and more perceive to global or universal values.

As a matter of fact the 2008 Candlelight Protests was the largest public demonstration since the Democratic Movement of 1987 and continued on for the longest time in the history of Korean.<sup>5</sup> The protest has brought the spark and emergence of the online space and the agenda was created in online space, whereby public opinions spread via online. This medium has become the key role in translating the public opinions into offline demonstrations [31]. Amazingly, the teenagers, who were the other group of young generation participated composed of more than fifty percent of the demonstrators, popularly anchored the demonstration. The teenagers were very vocal and want to be heard by the government and they criticize towards the policy makers. This demonstration has marked as one of the Korean histories when the teenagers demonstrated in a large number for the first time and led to the national attention. The reasons behind the Candlelight Protests were the spreading of educational policies, and the dissatisfaction of the beef trade negotiation with the United States has grown the anxiety and distrust to the President Lee's ruling.<sup>6</sup>

It is very interesting to discuss how the Internet cafes plays very significant role in the reaction of the protest during 2008. Most of the well-known cafes such as *True Picture*, *JjukBbang*, *Candle Girls Korea* and *Association of Teens* were among the activist-type cafes that sought the repossess the government's decision to resume U.S. beef imports. Furthermore, the *National Youth and Student Coalition* and *National Middle and High School Students Coalition* were categorized as the political mass organizations, which has primarily very strong objective to ensure education reforms and human rights of youth. This discussion shows that cyber activism of the young generation became the massive

<sup>5</sup> Demonstrators demanded Korean government to revoke its U.S-Korea beef trade agreement. Korea was one of the three largest beef export markets for the United States, next to Japan and Mexico. However, the Lee administration's negotiations with the United States caused Korea to forfeit its rights to establish its own sanitary standards for imported beefs. After the announcement of the negotiation, worries for mad cow disease proliferated and the public expressed strong anger toward the government for endangering national health. In no time, mass demonstrations demanding President Lee's impeachment and renegotiation with the United States. Ultimately, the demonstrations put enough pressure on the Lee administration to have President Lee make a public apology and to renegotiate with Washington to regain some of its right to impose ban on U.S beef imports, when it can possibly threaten the health of Korean citizens [33].

<sup>6</sup> Opinions of teenagers protesting against U.S beef imports formed primarily around online communities. The online cafes in Daum.net are one of the top Internet portal sites of Korea, had the most numbers of such communities. A total of 35 cafes, which were managed by teenagers, showed up when a keyword search was performed with “candlelight” or “US beef”. When the same search was performed in all top five portal sites, a total of 107 cafes returned. These cafes can be classified into two categories: “entertainment type cafes” and newly introduced “activist type cafes” which promoted different ideas to attract the young population.



advantage for the demonstration to highlight the impact of the international matters on the national agenda. With the demand from the young generation to be considered as the political actors, political rights and other activities involved during the demonstrations encourage the young communities to realize their political rights at that time. However, the continuous and strong political activeness of the Korean young communities still be questioned due to many arguments and research conducted proving that they were politically inactive and politically active based on the event-driven which caused to the declination support to the Korean government.

### III. MOVING TOWARDS POLITICAL ACTIVE, POLITICAL INACTIVE & POLITICAL ASSERTIVE: SOUTH KOREA & MALAYSIA

The historic moment of the World Cup Soccer mobilization in June 2002, has led to the Candlelight Protest in 2008. Looking at what happen in the end of 2002 and the voter turnout in 16<sup>th</sup> Korean Presidential Election held in 2002 proven the decrease percentage of voter's age below 34 years old. Based on the analysis of turnout in the 16<sup>th</sup> Presidential election by 2003 Seoul National Commission, the voters' age 20-24 years old voted in the 15<sup>th</sup> Presidential election was 66.4 percent and in the 16<sup>th</sup> Presidential election, it was only 57.9 percent turnout in the voting. While 69.9 percent of 25-29 years old group of voters participated in the 15<sup>th</sup> Presidential election and 55.2 percent turnout in the 16<sup>th</sup> Presidential election. The 30-34 years old voters added up the problem of the participation in the election where only 64.3 percent turnout to vote compared in the 1997, 80.4 percent participated in the voting. There are many factors that lead the decreasing number of voter's turnout during the election. This will be discussed in the paper to focus on the reasons behind this matter that attract the young generation under 30 years old to participate in the political system. The reflection of the young voter's turnout during the General Elections 2004 and 2008 as shown in the Figure 1, clarifies the political interest and political participation among the young generation in South Korea.

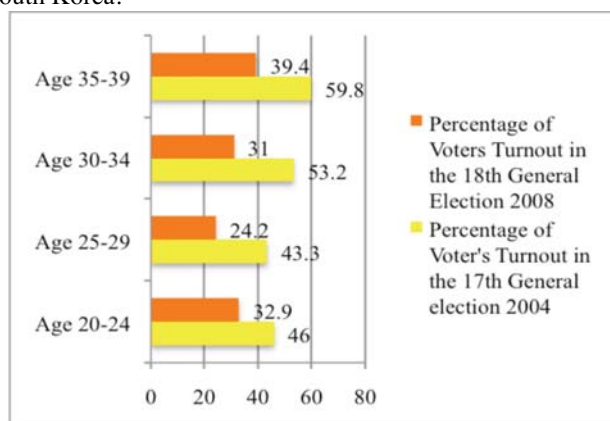


Fig. 1 Percentage of Voter's Turnout in the 2004 and 2008 General Elections  
 Source: National Election Commission, Republic of Korea, 2004 & 2008

Fig. 1 discussed on the percentage of the young voters age 25-29 has decreased to 19.1 percent in 2008 and the voters age

20-24 made only 13.1 percent. The decreasing number of young generation participating in the General Elections played significant impact and this percentage was based on the total turnout of 17,212,690 (46 percent of the total population). Many scholars placed the impact of Internet usages and the new media facilities, which blend in the young generation life. To agree with the argument and research done by the scholars, the political participation among the young shows that they were very assertive and politically event-driven in pursuing their political rights especially involving the electoral systems.

However, the Fig. 2 in the 16<sup>th</sup> Presidential Election in 2002 shown below can be discussed thoroughly to highlight the young generation at this time. With the event of World Cup 2002, the young were very energetic as has been discussed above that encouraged them to participate actively due to several occasions during this Presidential Election. 56.5 percent of the 20-29 young group participated in the election as to ensure the young candidate to be elected which brought the President Roh to be elected.

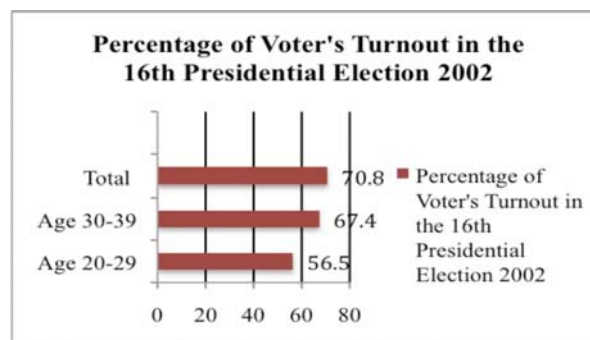


Fig. 2 Voters Turnout During 2002 Presidential Election  
 Source: National Election Commission, Republic of Korea, 2002

Factors that lead to the decrease number of voters turnout in the last 2002 Presidential election has brought the issue of humanitarian, human rights, humanities and emotional factors related to the incident of the two Korean girls murder. The mourning has affected the government to settle down and find the best solution to gain the support from the masses. With the modern technologies surrounding the Korean population nowadays, the usage of Internet in mobilizing the political information has increased to more than 90 percent. Furthermore, with the power of New Networked Information Technologies (NNITs) in several political and non-political activities, it is said that the 2030 Generation was the major actor behind the scene [32].

The 2007 Presidential Election takes place in 19 December 2007 with 23,732,854 out of 62.9 percent voter's turnout and is considered low according to the National Election Commission of South Korea.

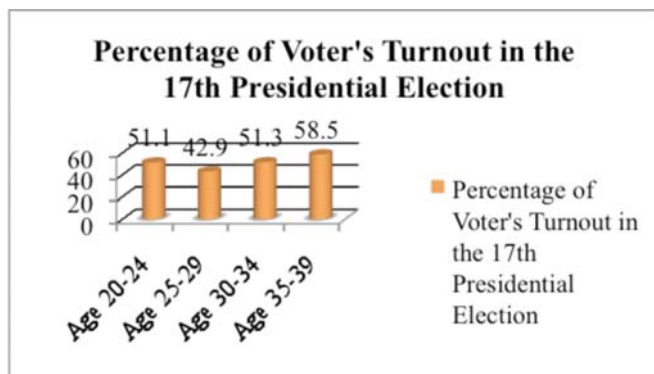


Fig. 3 17th Presidential Election Voter's Turnout  
Source: National Election Commission, Republic of Korea, 2007

This is not a political conspiracy that purposely propagated by the ruling party. This situation explains that government should continuously interfere in this matter for the purpose of restraining this 'symptom' to be progressively extended. It cannot be denied; in nowadays youth are wiser to absorb their surrounding in confronting the reality of life. The detriment of youth has been spread as cancer cells when media was proactively brought the news via mass media on the moral decadence of young generation till obscure their greatness and excellence in the eyes of society.

South Korea has a tremendous group of young generation that plays their role in the political dynamism. However, in contrary Malaysia under the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak (Najib) has introduced the 1Malaysia concept as one of the approach to facilitate people especially the young generation. In Malaysia, each youth is cultivated with positive thoughts in order to nurture and harmonize the national unity. Under the premiership of Najib, he guarantees a progressively new paradigm for Malaysia in improving its position at global and international level. It fact, it was fattened by the launching of 1Youth 1Malaysia emblem by Sports and Youth Minister, Datuk Ahmad Shabery Cheek at Putrajaya. The launching of this new emblem somehow has attracted more youth to take part in programmes organized by the ministry.

Among Malaysian walk of life, youth become one of the eminent cluster group that given priority in achieving the 1Malaysia concept, hence this community group was granted with high acknowledgement throughout the launching of 1Youth emblem. On the other hand, the spirit of patriotism and unity is necessitated for the formation of balance Malaysian in order to ensure that the implementation of this concept will successfully accomplish. For that reason, the government through Sports and Youth Ministry should perform their role and use various means in proposing the best formula to produce the young leader as a successor to the existing leaders.

However, in this political discourse, the patriotism spirit among youth in Malaysia is often triggering by the government actions that involve either directly or indirectly. The social crime rate of youth is increasing and concerning by many people. Among the crimes committed by them are hooligan activity, 'rempit', drug abuse, snatch theft, playing

truant, smoking culture, bully, molest cases and many more. Do all activities can be stifled by government in order to educate and inculcate those groups to realize their past mistakes while constructing a practical human capital as suggested by Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak in his 1Malaysia concept? Nevertheless, Malaysia did prepare for the solutions to counter the issues by the implementation of various programmes and agenda. While, social capital was the main element been emphasized by the South Korean policy. Although the youth are very excited in conducting the activities that occasionally be considered as 'immoral' by certain people, but they are very responsive to the political environment of the country. Therefore, their role and responsibility towards Malaysian's voting trend should not be denied. The presence of youth in every electoral process is significant as stated in statistics, research, analysis and reports gathered by any particular organization.

The election history of Malaysia indicates that youth are regarded as the main actor who determines the constancy of political party. Their aggressive attitude instead of progressive as been used in South Korea to label the youth in voicing out the rights and privileges issues is greatly admired. They managed to choose the best way in dealing with the government actions. This can be seen in the by-election that taken place in *Bukit Gantang* and *Bukit Selambau*. At the mean time, the youth's involvement as middleman in their none-voting area has inflamed the balloting process. On the other hand, Malaysia also waits for the next general election. Furthermore, the presence of youth in each election is awaited since they apparently contribute to the party's victory.

The main issues that questioned on youths by Malaysian in nowadays is concerning on their level of patriotism and nationalism towards Malaysia. Does the youth's political participation increase and abreast to their nationalism spirit? Obviously, this issue is quite difficult to be untied and determined. This situation has been questioning the nationalistic level of the youth in South Korea as well. With the fluctuation percentage of the voter's turnout in the past elections, made the research to hunt for the answer.

In addition, the concern of Malaysia Education Ministry, Defence Ministry and Higher Education Ministry towards the development of youth's future is undeniable. It was then implemented by a number of programmes and policies, which planned by the government. Among the examples are National Service Training Programme, Youth Service Programme, and Volunteer Consolidation Training. Besides, the Non-Government Organization also take the same alternative in inculcating some good values for youth by using approaches consisting of religious, motivational, leadership and many more such as Islamic Youth Association of Malaysia, Malaysian Muslim Consumers of Association, Welfare and Islamic Preaching Organization and National Muslim Students Association of Malaysia.

During the Parliamentary session, many complaints, criticisms, accusations or even complimentary can be heard when the government wants to table the new policy or programme for improvement. Hence, the government also

appoints a representative among youth in House of Senate as recognition to them in Malaysian political system, yet they may help for the development of the nation. Former Deputy of Higher Education Minister, Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said that youth does play an important role in assisting the government to supply input on needs and wants of that cluster group. The direct contact with government then would enable the development to be implemented as targeted. Saifuddin also suggested that more youth should be placed at State Assembly and Village Development and Security Committee. He added "In nowadays, more than 40 percent of 26 million populations in Malaysia consist of youth, in fact the statistic indicates that the presence of youth is required as they also contributes to the country's development". The loudness of young leaders in preserving the young generation's rights does give a positive feedback either they represent the government or the opposition party in Malaysian political system.

Youth associations or organizations in Malaysia, which acted as development agent, should move aggressively and comprehensively in any government programmes. To avoid from people's misunderstanding and being labeled as static or rigid and needed as for ad-hoc purposes, this youth association or organization should be totally utilized. However, in the mean time, this particular group is entitled for chances and encouraged to actively involve in programmes such as *Rakan Muda* activity, School Co-curriculum, Orientation Day, Sports Day, and Music Festival, debate and so forth in line with 1Malaysia concept. Youth are more attracted to join programmes that meet their enthusiasm and interest, yet give them serenity to their daily life. Therefore, the unity can be cultivated as well as developing their natural aptitude; hence the thinking epistemology among youth will not turn to be negative and contributing to detrimental of society development in Malaysia.

It is said that the spirit of nationalism and patriotism among youth should be instilled beginning with the family institution. Through this institution, it is enable them to nurture the sense of love towards family and the country as well. This approach looks easier but will be turned otherwise if not reared with encouragement, support and awareness. This situation then leads to the increment of social problem rate. Therefore, the support should be continuously given to them since in pregnancy, home, pre-school, school until they admitted to university. With the situation in South Korea, most of the youth were the only child in the family and been raised with different family background. Family institution is one of the most vibrant factors that can help the change in the stigma blooming South Korea.

In multi-ethnics society like Malaysia, everybody should have a high spirit of patriotism; yet think of the future and people's survival in order to live in more meaningful life. Identity or racial identities should be retained as quoted in Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's speech "Malaysian are probably came from various races but Malaysia is our country together. As such, although we can maintain our hereditary culture but it cannot be authentic and too exclusive. On the other hand, the culture that owns by all races must exist in each practiced

*culture whereby the original culture is recognized as a pillar to everybody in determining the identity of Malaysia."* [34]

Nevertheless, looking back to the political history in pre-Malayan Union era in 1946, the youth has already formed a community group that responsive in fighting for rights and responsibility towards nation [34]. During that moment, it can be said that the sense of patriotism among youth is so amazing especially in preserving their nation, language, Sultan and motherland from colonization. The emergence of young leaders such as Tun Dr. Ismail, Tun Mahathir, Tan Cheng Lock, Roslie Dhobie and many more were harmonize the political democracy in Malaya from British occupation. Their struggleness were consistently carried out until they enable to get the independence for Malaya. Obviously, their actions before the formation of Malaysia were driven by sense of responsibility in fighting for their rights in their own motherland.

The different can be seen throughout their past history of life and the environmental factor which urged the society to fight for their rights. The fact that happened should grants the young generation with lessons in order to teach them to be more honor and thankful. With the unconditional of political crisis, global financial problem and spreading of dangerous epidemic, these issues are hoped to grown-up the young generation in facing with becoming meanders and challenges. The hardship of life did also help youth to be more proactive, progressive, matured and wise. But, on the other situation there are a few people who acted unpredictably when they get involved in some social problems. Malaysia and South Korea shared similar position in explaining the youth political dynamism and political activism due to country's history. However, does the urge of life that gone through by them would enable to produce a generation who already forgotten on courtesy, become rebellious, considered themselves as always do the right things, yet should be heard by certain parties? Should Malaysia pointing out to the failure of government implementation in handling the youth's problems? Do the mistakes caused by the education system, political system, programme implementation and so forth?

As a conclusion, the introduction, implementation have been carried out by the government and the society became an indicator in determining the success of programmes. It is based on the implementation and people's acceptance by considering the approaches required by them. However, there is no doubt that the identity of youth should be nurtured and instilled in order to form a society that enable them to face the challenge with high responsibility and credibility.

#### IV. EVALUATION

##### *A. Electronic politico-hegemony-government-democracy*

April 15, 2004 has taken place the 17<sup>th</sup> general elections in South Korea and there were 35.6 million voters registered out of 48.2 million people. They were given the choices to choose one district representative and a party during the elections. With the two different votes, electors selected 243 district representatives from each election district and 56 party representatives in proportion to the votes for each party

nationwide. Composing the 17th National Assembly, these 299 parliamentarians took office on June 2, 2004 to fulfill the legislative function of the government in the next four years. Together with the president, these newly elected representatives will change the course of Korean politics as well as the nation's development. This is highlighted by the fact that the dominant role of the president was diminished in the area of domestic policymaking, while the National Assembly will play a larger role in major policy decision areas as a symbol of democratization in South Korean politics [35].

According to Park, democratization refers to the decentralization of presidential power in South Korea in recent years. What used to be monopolized power wielded by the central government, the president, and the executive branch is now shared with the local government and the legislative and judicial branches of government. Likewise, there is power sharing among the government, civil society, and business sectors. The 'sharing approach' used by the Korean government enhanced the integrity and participation among the people which provokes the ill policy to be spreading in the administration [36].

Mass media is a typically passive medium and currently opted out by the people to be used as one of premier tool to gain information and keep updated. Young people nowadays are pioneering their life using the digital technology to facilitate new social networks and experience immediate information within a virtual public space. If a digital democracy is to be achieved, empirical research is necessary to better understand young people's use of digital technology. As we can see Korea was one of the advanced country in the global digital media scene. They have the ability to build the most accessible wired country and the glory of new media services among the nation. The revelation of the heterogeneous constitution of new media culture rather than passive adoption of globally standardized universal technology should be commended [37].

In the event the public obtained such favorable and positive news or information, their thoughts and movement will make them more optimistic. It is true that information reported by the media to public is not parallel with the context and actual meanings to be made known. According to Shaukat, "*The capsules of information we get are often detached from their contexts and meanings and are essentially packaged for easy consumption. For instance, before we are told about the real causes of a riot, another riot plague plane crash war is upon us.*" The media control is an easy and smart route, which is benefited by the government as a hegemony agent to provide information that eventually will influence the public's thinking [38].<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The government has played a dominant role in ensuring that sensitive issues or political issues and filter any information before it is made known to the public. These filtering by the media responsible of reporting such events and the media are subjected to several rules and regulations and Acts which barred the media from reporting the truth. The media operates as a source of information and not to persuade the public to act as such when any information is reported.

With that, the main media will play an important role in controlling the public's mind and will not support any reports from alternative parties and will always label them as a defector, destroyer of a country's future, traitor, a pompous and etc. This sentiment further strengthens the status quo of the government for managing to gain support and trust from the public. It is undeniable that the role of schools and universities are used to further strengthen the hegemonies politics of the government among students and educators.

The information about the governance system are provided without a flaw in accordance with the ready made system and executed all orders given by the government efficiently.

Furthermore, the mass media are regarded as an instrument that can strengthen the loyalty of local societies and enhance the development of political parties. Realizing that the mass media be it the press i.e. newspapers and magazines and also electronic media like television, radio, other visual aids that is able to give wider coverage right up to the countryside, it is definitely undeniable. The mass media is often an instrument used by certain parties to create racial tensions among our multi racial society.

E-government informs citizens about their representatives and how they may be contacted. It also improves government efficiency by enabling citizens to pay transactions online. Whereas e-politics is the use of Internet technology to improve the effectiveness of political decision-making by making citizens aware of the how and why of political decision-making and facilitating their participation in this process. E-democracy is a new phenomenon, which means citizens will have to learn how to use it. Democracy requires that citizen's care that the system works and actively participates in the process. However, when faced with multiple levels of government and a mass of information, participation is problematic and time-consuming. Furthermore, citizens' concerns differ in their priority. Customization will enable citizens to finely focus on personally critical issues. A citizen wishing to track trends in national park governance, for example, could use an electronic lobbyist agent (or lobby) to monitor this domain and influence the political process [39].

For people who study the interaction between the Internet and politics, South Korea offers some unique perspectives. Firstly, it is one of the world's most wired countries [40]. Another, perhaps more important, aspect is its relatively short democratic history. Until the early 1990s, South Korea was not a truly democratic society. This changed when its rapid economic expansion provided a population with a thirst for democracy and a high level of interest in politics in general [41]. For example, the turnout for the 1997 election was 80.7%, which is comparatively much greater than that of the United States [42].

## V. CONCLUSION

Nowadays, it is unseemly appropriate if this discourse did not pointed out on the youth involvement in Korean politics. South Korea has already acknowledged the presence of youth in politics when the government gives them the right to vote as early age of 19. However, the amendment to the Act of



reducing the eligible age of voting from 21-years-old to 18-years old has been revised as taken place in the developed country such as United States of America, but the freedom to vote without restraint in some countries are still limited compared to other countries. The rationale taken by the developed countries in reducing the age limit from 21 to 18 because the age group of 18 to 24 years has started to work and paying taxes which automatically entitled them the right to vote and elect. Furthermore, Brazilian and Nicaraguan gets their right to vote as early as 16 while Philippines were allowed to vote when they reached 15-years-old. It clearly stated that the election's record of these countries explained the electoral process was involved by their young generation whom age is between 15-16-years old. Despite the maturity issue of the youngsters in regards of the politic, adulthood is not measured by the age, but through the way they think and react, as well as their responsibility and rationality. Look at arising cases of social crisis in our society lately, is it because of lack of maturity behavior?

There are several countries that honored their younger generation to get involved in the democracy process. It proved that the government to decide on the country's political system as well as the adults has trusted youth. In South Korea context, the polling registration only started at the age of 19-years-old, but the power of youth's vote was never wasted as can be seen in the results of the general election wave. Hence, the confidence put into the young voter's power is never futile. In addition, young generation definitely is a keystone assertion of successful of one's political party. In fact in nowadays, media alternative is a popular medium used by youth to channel their opinion against their right and any current issue. They are smart enough in choosing the right path to convey their message regarding government's approaches or action.

On the other hand, the main concern is how far South Korean youngsters realized their right as a voter. Is participation of young generation in politics will determine an election's result? Despite of ICT growth and civic awareness among them, we again shocked with the report saying there are plenty youngsters whom are not register yet as a voter. The Korean government has put many efforts have been taken to monitor and encourage this group to participate as a voter. It is now unattractive to youth to register as a voter especially when the polling process take place in few days, yet the government will run the country by the ruling party which won in the election and in the mean time the imbalance of voting trend can be figured out.

This phenomenon shall not continue because these youngsters are the tomorrow's leader. To ensure the democracy of our country, these numbers should be taken seriously. Most importantly is the youth should get the chance to vote and to know that their sacrifices and time are significant in helping the continuity of the democracy. In spite of focusing to the adolescent, do not forget the adult group. The adults are categorized as traditional group, not young but do plays a role in the politic system. Conclusion is our adolescent is not the ultimate establishment to a ruler party. There should be a balance between these two groups, young

generation and adults. They are the reason to the successful of a democracy in Republic of Korea. By the summary we can see that youth is not determinant once and for all to the party that would be ruling the country in the future time. Hence, traditional cluster, which is not categorized as 'young', plays a vital role in country's political system. The concern of military training in ROK towards the development of youth's future is undeniable. It was then implemented by a number of programmes and policies, which planned by the government. Among the examples is the Military Service of 21 months that put ROK as the country who made compulsory for the programme, Children and Youth school Services, and National Youth Center of Korea as an example was opened on August 15th, 2001 amid the support and expectations of youths. The achievement of the Center's opening had taken ten years since the government's announcement of "Youth Basic Plan in Korea" ('91). The government to function on behalf of the nation with regard to youth training activities established The Center. It is to take on tasks that are difficult for the private sector such as youth leadership training, demonstration of youth training activities, development and distribution of training programs, network building and information sharing among training facilities, international interchange activities, and providing support for nation-wide youth training activities. The National Youth Center is located amid the nature of Cheonan, a city well known for its patriotism and loyalty, where the Independence Memorial Hall stands in harmony with the forest and hillside at the foot of Heukseong Mountain. Fully equipped with a various range of cultural and sports facilities, and outdoor facilities for training youths and youth leaders, it functions as the foremost center providing leading training techniques and facilities for the youth of the nation [44]. Besides, the Non-Government Organization also take the same alternative in inculcating some good values for youth by using approaches consisting of religious, motivational, leadership and many more. Where is the mistake made when the country saw them involved in street demonstration, protest to government and incriminate in social ills where they assumed as if it is the real democracy they known for emancipation action. Are we willing to see youth of the nation who expected to be the country leaders in future, yet turned to be aggressive groups, uncontrolled, unadvisable and denial to religious claim? Compared to other Asian countries, Thailand goes to more democratic process earlier on 14th December 1973 has witnessed the fall for Reign of Thanom Army on the name of democracy, hence band of educated raised to object the government that they believe to obstruct the voice of students, yet show their protest towards government and citizen who require for better and democratic institution and fair election. Its not only stops there but continuously done by Red and Yellow Shirt clan for the purpose of defending their own government and leaders. This is the democracy that has been practiced in Thailand but not in South Korea since the citizen still under control and well-mannered. However, South Korea still in high risk to face the new born of youth leaders in political arena since they are able of causing wave in contemporary politics flow. But if we

have an agreement, stability may incarnate. Therefore, serious attention should be given to the source of matters that surrounded youth from raise to fight for the love country. Initiative taken by the Government, NGO, Election Commission, family institution, schools, Higher Educational, private sector, not even to sides for any politics party but this figure frightened the citizens since the country will have a group of people who have a certain attitude in the middle on their responsibilities towards family and country. It is hoped the youth will never take for granted the religious that thoughts to them since borned, respect each other and have a good attitude with positive-minded, clean and spirited. The choice in their own hand and if we choose to change or shake the politics platform by reason of we are the best to lead in future, raise up and don't forget to register as a voter. Nobody can say the lucky one but we will never achieve without trying the best.

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