

## The Development of Citizen Journalism

*“My generation, the 386 generation, were in the streets fighting in the 80s against the military dictatorship. Now, 20 years later, we are combat-ready with our internet,”*  
– Oh Yeon Ho, Founder, OhmyNews

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To  
David and Christine Donald  
who made this thesis possible

I am a debtor.

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Yours aye,

-AG  
Cambridge, UK  
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# 1 Introduction: An Industry in Peril and the Coming Polyculture

## 1.1 The Monoculture

The term *monoculture* was first employed to mean “a common culture or way of life” in 1968. Previously, it was used to describe “the cultivation of a single crop ... to the exclusion of others,” and carried the implicit danger that a single disease or malady could wipe out an entire farm (“Monoculture, N. And Adj.” 2008). Both definitions are instructive when analyzing the current state of journalism around the world, but particularly so in the United States. Primarily, professionals produced news and were subsidized by a large group of advertisers, both national and local. However, the closure of major newspapers across the U.S. – including the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and Denver’s *Rocky Mountain News* – highlight major issues of the model’s sustainability.

Just below the 72-point-headline closures, problems with this model become more visible. In the first five and a half months of 2009, newspapers made 9,800 jobs redundant across the United States. From 2007 through the first five months of 2009 144 newspapers permanently closed (Smith “Paper Cuts” 2009; Smith “Paper Cuts >> Closed Newspapers” 2009). Why are organizations shedding jobs and closing papers in what was once a thriving industry? Because it is now less profitable. The Newspaper Association of America’s 2008 data show that papers’ primary source of income, advertising of all forms, declined 17.7 percent that year and 9.4 percent the year before. Thus, newspapers’ advertising revenue was \$11.78 (£7.495) billion lower in 2008 than it was in 2006 (“Advertising Expenditures” 2009). While one reason for lower print advertising revenue is surely the global recession, another must also be a shift in

audience behavior. In 2008 the Internet overtook newspapers in popularity for getting news about “national and international issues,” making the Web second only to television as a preferred news medium (Kohut and Remez 2008). Americans, at least, are reading fewer papers making advertising there a less appealing proposition for businesses. Moreover, advertising on the Internet has not fully compensated for decreasing print revenues. In 2008, newspapers lost \$7.469 (£4.752) billion in print revenue and added just \$3.109 (£1.987) billion in online revenue (“Advertising Expenditures” 2009). This is forcing a drastic change in the news business.

## 1.2 The Polyculture

The shift of readers away from their print products paired with declining advertising revenue has forced news organizations to respond. For decades, these trends have pulled them away from the monoculture. Instead, the sector created a *polyculture* of news production. It has tried a dizzying number of new online and offline models which, to varying extents, attack two problems of making news profitable: decreasing production costs and seeking new revenue sources. The consortium of not-for-profit radio stations called National Public Radio (NPR) was one of the first new models in the United States. NPR, along with state/local affiliates, uses the standard production model, but seeks funding in the form of both “sponsorship” (which should be seen as traditional advertising) and donations from listeners (“Npr : Sponsor and Support”). A new class of free dailies, like the *London Lite* or the Chicago-based Tribune Co.’s *Red Eye*, is now also popular. The free-daily model decreases costs by covering less expensive news (celebrities) and relying on wire copy. It increases revenue by massively increasing circulation to improve value for advertisers: it is

distributed, free of cost, at mass-transit points ("Londonlite : This Is London" 2009; Redeye : Home" 2009). Yet other models utilize donations only, like ProPublica which funds investigative journalism with a private foundation (Pérez-Peña 2007).

Ready access to the Internet has also enabled wholly new models. Aggregation is one. These sites decrease cost by linking to content created elsewhere and increase revenue by selling context-based advertising. Google News is consistently popular, and some months Yahoo! News is the most popular news site on the Web (Stelter 2008). Other aggregators, like EveryBlock, operate on the same model but collect content from additional sources (like local governments) related to very small geographic areas ("About Everyblock" 2009).

Another attempt to use the Web for news relied on "UGC" (User Generated Content). As the cost (both in money and time) of producing digital content decreased, individuals started producing items that were useful to news organizations. Most famous of these UGC based sites is undoubtedly YouTube.com where individuals post videos ranging from pirated professional content to guitar playing lessons. Lasica described the relationship between news Web sites and UGC; he created a typology of six broad types (Lasica 2003). One type was the "full-fledged participatory news [site]," where "citizen-reporters contribute a significant amount of material" (Lasica 2003).

These sites – which are also called citizen journalism sites – decreased costs by "crowdsourcing"<sup>1</sup> the most expensive part of news production, the reporters, and kept quality high by employing editors (Howe 2006). They were able to

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<sup>1</sup> Jeff Howe first used the term in a June 2006 Wired magazine article. He explains: "Remember outsourcing? Sending jobs to India and China is so 2003. The new pool of cheap labor: everyday people using their spare cycles to create content, solve problems, even do corporate R & D." (Howe 2006)



collect multiple viewpoints from their readers, promoting “democratic participation” in a way that news organizations have been trying to do since the popularization of the personal camcorder in the 1980s<sup>2</sup> (McGill 1989; Gillmor 2006). Moreover, unlike foundation-backed news organizations like the aforementioned ProPublica, these sites were not beholden to a single funder. They sold advertising to anyone, enabling additional editorial freedom.

### 1.3 Research Rationale and Question

Despite these advantages, “full-fledged” sites are rare and even more rarely successful. In 2002 and 2003, for example, the BBC started a citizen journalism site called iCan (later renamed the Action Network). iCan was the Corporation’s reaction to journalistic and political events at the turn of the century; it was “missing big stories.” It was broadsided by the 2000 fuel-price protests and the remarkably low turnout in the 2001 elections (Gillmor 2006, 124). The site was designed to let people create and publish their own news, “iCan’s users, not the staff are expected to write the bulk of the guide as time goes on.” The massive BBC organization gave the site its full backing. It assigned broadcast journalists to work on iCan and promote it through the Corporation’s other properties. One broadcaster, Samanthi Dissanayake, said that the BBC “let people know they can do things for themselves” (Gillmor 2006, 124). One name

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout its short history, commentators of all backgrounds have claimed that “new media” would make the news more democratic. An oft-argued line is that of A. J. Liebling, an early 20th century journalist and media critic associated with *The New Yorker*. He argued, cynically, that “Freedom of the press is limited to those who own one,” however contemporary commentators note today’s “presses” are so inexpensive that anyone can own one (Gillmor 2006, xi). Although many heralded the Internet as the ultimate of these democratizers, this analysis appeared earlier, coinciding with the advent of cheap, consumer-oriented, media-making equipment. A *New York Times* article from 1989, elaborates on the potential of a then new technology, the camcorder: “On local and network television, camcorder footage of news events is also appearing frequently, spurring a debate over the camcorder’s potential as a ‘democratizing technology’ to widen the range of viewpoints expressed in the news media,” (McGill 1989). With the popularization of the Internet, prophecies of rampant democratization proliferated. For example, the clear allusion to democratic publishing in title of the first chapter of Dan Gillmor’s definitive monograph on the subject: “From Tom Paine to Blogs and Beyond,” (Gillmor 2006, 1).

change and three years on, the publicly funded BBC could not justify keeping the site live. Citizens were not contributing. The Washington Post, too, attempted a citizen journalism project designed to cover one of its outlying counties. Called Loudon Extra, it was supposed to be a mix of the Post's professional coverage and citizens reporting on their neighborhood. However, much of the site's most popular content is produced by the professionals working for the Washington Post ("Loudon Extra" 2009).

One citizen journalism site has been a shining success; that is it remains widely read, is written by a diverse group of citizens, has a large influence in politics, and is economically sustainable. Called OhmyNews and based in Seoul, South Korea, this organization has become the ideal-typical citizen journalism organization; Lascia uses it to define what a "full-fledged" site should look like.

This paper will investigate why citizen journalism is rarely successful by focusing on the most prominent of these sites, OhmyNews. Additionally, it will make comparisons between South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan in order to strengthen its argument concerning the conditions that promoted the development of citizen journalism. It argues that the conditions stemmed from the strong, developmental state. By limiting press freedom (as many prior governments had done) and building massive Internet infrastructure, the state simultaneously gave a pre-existing political cohort both the means and the tools to create citizen journalism once the repression ended in the late 1980s.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout this paper press freedom is used to mean the ability of journalistic actors to operate *relatively* free of government intervention. This is not to imply that they are allowed to print anything they please, but instead to mean that they are not subject to prior censorship and can reasonably expect that they will not be punished (legally, extralegally, or economically) for publishing a story that runs counter to the current leadership's vested interests. Democratization can also be an ideology-laden term. Like press freedom, in this paper it should not be read as such. Instead all future references to democracy and democratization ought be

## 2 Previous Studies

The literature surrounding OhmyNews is varied, and much of what exists is journalistic. None of it directly addresses the conditions under which citizen journalism develops.

The largest body of work on OhmyNews has used the organization as a case study in participatory politics in the Internet age. All of these studies highlight the 2002 presidential election (and some identify the CAGE movement in 2000, discussed below), as key examples of how, through online collaboration, citizens can directly influence politics (Hauben 2006; Hauben 2008; Joyce 2007; Kim, Moon and Yang 2004). Other work, like a masters thesis by Sutton and data collected by Joyce, address questions of why individual citizens write for OhmyNews (Joyce 2007; Sutton 2006). Sutton's study is unique in that it utilizes uses and gratifications theory to investigate the actions of citizen journalists (See, for example Blumler and Katz 1974). Other studies have further investigated the citizen journalists themselves, asking how they created a distinct identity (Rauch 2007). Additionally, researchers have asked if OhmyNews represented a new type of alternative media even though it sold advertising (Kim and Hamilton 2006), and if it showed a relationship between social movements and new organizational innovations (Kern and Nam 2008). Various descriptive accounts of OhmyNews appeared in English-language news publications, most of which followed Dan Gillmor's coverage in his *San Jose Mercury News* technology column and later in his monograph, *We the Media* (Gillmor 2003; Gillmor 2006; Gluck 2003; Hermida 2006; Hua 2007; Onishi

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understood as a indicating more individual involvement in the choice of government (in stark contrast, for example, to South Korea under the Third, Fourth, and Fifth republics where military officers took over the levers of government by force and never submitted themselves to elections).

2004; Stabe 2006; Weiss 2005; Woyke 2009). These journalistic accounts examine more closely the conditions supporting citizen journalism than all of the academic work, perhaps because journalists who see the proliferating polyculture in their day-to-day work write them. However, they still fail to address the genesis of the phenomenon in a serious way. Stabe addresses the question most directly (asking not what the conditions are but where they emerges) but does so in fewer than 500 words.

The new polyculture of funding models makes the question of why OhmyNews worked more important than ever. In a world where major newspapers are failing and no obvious solution has emerged, it would be irresponsible to ignore any new approach. Researchers must understand citizen journalism in particular, as it offers both cost efficiencies and potential democratic benefits.

This study aims to provide some preliminary theories that are testable by future work. Unlike all other studies on OhmyNews, it will proceed via the comparative historical method.

### **3 A modification of the Neo-Lakatosian Case Selection Method via the Addition of the Method of Difference**

#### **3.1 Explaining Neo-Lakatosian Case Selection**

King and Sznajder begin their argument for comparative studies involving the best cases – even if the total number of cases is therefore restricted (See other relatively high N comparative studies like Therborn 1977) – by suggesting that science advances though what Lakatos calls competing “scientific research programmes” (Lakatos 1970). That is, it “advances not through any single confrontation of ‘theory’ with ‘facts,’ but with the defensive attempts by

scientists to save their original theories” (King and Sznajder 2006, 764). They state, too, that “theories can never be disproved – the total rejection of a research tradition [programme] (or paradigm) can never be secured by the facts. Rather other processes or forces determine when a ‘paradigm shift’ or the death of a research tradition occurs” (King and Sznajder 2006, 765). They go on to suggest that in the aggregate, these competing research programmes can reveal interesting answers about the world, particularly when they are put into direct competition with one another via comparison. In this way, they argue that any individual study “[points] out the strengths and weaknesses of theories located in competing research [programmes]” (King and Sznajder 2006, 765).

What characteristics must studies have to do this? A study “should be explicit about identifying the macro independent and dependent variables” but it must also “provide ‘thick’ studies of crucial cases” (King and Sznajder 2006, 766). “Thick” studies should firstly show an in-depth historical understanding of a case as advocated by Weber. They call this a “historical version of the Geertzian ‘thickness’ of ethnographic accounts” (King and Sznajder 2006, 766). Second, studies should test their mechanisms in multiple ways. Here, rather than simply making a compelling argument for one country, the addition of the method of difference will offer negative evidence from other states.

The identification of appropriate cases becomes an important question. King and Sznajder note the cases that should be subjected to comparison are those that “the scientific community, within and between research [programmes], makes judgments over time ... [and] some cases loom larger than others. ... Typically these are ... countries that are either conspicuous successes or failures” (2006, 767).

### 3.2 Neo-Lakatosian Case Selection in Practice

Based on the recommendations of King and Sznajder, examining OhmyNews in South Korea, and looking to Japan and Taiwan for negative evidence, are the right cases to determine the conditions under which citizen journalism begins. First, OhmyNews represents a “conspicuous success.” It is so widely known, and viewed as *ideal-typical* by journalism scholars, that Lasica defines an entire category of participatory media based on OhmyNews (Lasica 2003). Japan and Taiwan should be understood as “conspicuous failures.” Indeed, the same entrepreneurs that started OhmyNews in South Korea attempted to build a new organization in Japan and were forced to shut it down due to a lack of interest (Tokita 2008). While Taiwan represents a broadly similar economic and social structure to South Korea, no major citizen journalism efforts have been made there. These negative cases help to understand what conditions were important in South Korea because each is missing one that is present there. Thus, they create a kind of natural experiment. Just as biologists “knock out” genes of mice to see how they develop differently, Japan and Taiwan show that citizen journalism fails to develop when a critical condition is missing.

In keeping with the previously described Neo-Lakatosian perspective, South Korea will be subjected to a “thick” historical analysis, and Japan and Taiwan will be used as multiple tests of the conditions that this paper argues are critical to the development of citizen journalism.

### 3.3 The Logical Operation of Comparative Analysis: The Method of Difference

Ragin offers an authoritative volume on the logic of the comparative method. First, he delineates between case-oriented and variable-oriented approaches,

although the logic behind each is the same. Like King and Sznajder, Ragin notes “comparativists who use case-oriented strategies often want to understand or interpret specific cases because of their intrinsic value” (Ragin 1987, 35). South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan have intrinsic value in their surface-level similarities and distinctly different outcomes. Ragin argues the two primary logics at work in case-oriented comparative approaches are Mill’s method of agreement and indirect method of difference (Ragin 1987, 36-42). Agreement, however, cannot irrefutably establish causation (instead it simply highlights important correlations), nor can it account for multiple causation (Ragin 1987, 37). With these limitations in mind, Ragin introduces Mill’s indirect method of difference. Essentially, this method applies agreement twice. It “uses negative cases to reinforce conclusions drawn from positive cases” (Ragin 1987, 41). Using multiple negative cases, I will be able to identify which conditions were important by noting the difference between the countries. Indirect difference is not without limitations either. For example, it is impeded by conjunctural causation, whereby an investigator only sees a small subset of the actual circumstances causing phenomena.

#### **4 Korea: The Development of OhmyNews**

This section will examine the conditions in which South Korean citizen journalism flourished. It will show how citizen journalism resulted from the collision of two long-term social changes there, press freedom and Internet technology, and how that impact was utilized by a pre-existing political cohort.

These conditions were set in motion early in Korean history. The first example of press repression in the kingdom dates to the 16<sup>th</sup> century closure of

*Chobo* (Court Gazette) because “the events in the royal place should not be known to the common people and ... the secrets of the nation might be leaked to foreigners” (Youm 1996, 7-8). Although the roots of repression date back to the very first publication in Korea, it saw extensive oscillation during the 20<sup>th</sup> century under the various regimes that controlled Korea. The massive expansion of technological infrastructure is a story that dates from the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although it would be naïve to claim development began with Park Chung-hee’s military coup on May 16, 1961, it was under his military rule during the Third and Fourth Republics that economic development was emphasized and infrastructure rapidly expanded (Kim 2005, xxi; Youm 1986; Youm 1996; Amsden 1989; Davis 2004).

This section will address each of these items in turn. It begins with a short sub-section on the strong developmental state in Korea. It then details the historical record of press repression and infrastructure development in South Korea – made possible to a large extent by that strong state and state-led development – up to the point of OhmyNews’ founding in 2000. Next, it will examine various ways in which South Koreans – particularly, but not limited to, democratic activists who were emboldened by past repression and no longer shackled by a military government – mingled with the new connectivity offered by Internet. Finally, it will argue that activists used the available Internet infrastructure in various forms, one of which was the development of citizen journalism.

#### **4.1 The Developmental State in South Korea**

From the end of the Korean War to the 2000s, South Korea saw tremendous economic growth, turning it into a country wealthy enough to



support the kinds of Internet media in question. Using just one measure (GDP per capita by PPP in 1990 international dollars), it grew by a remarkable 2085 percent between 1950 and 2006 (from \$854 to \$17,813). In the same period, the United Kingdom grew 331 percent ("Indicator Gapminder Gdp\_Per\_Capita\_Ppp; Lindgren 2008). How this process of wealth accumulation happened is of interest because it will show that a strong state was required. Moreover, that strong state would have two unintended consequences that are of interest for tracing the development of citizen journalism.

That the Korean state was directly involved in capital building is not surprising. As argued by Karl Polanyi, "intervention is necessitated by a basic fact about capitalist markets: their inherent instability, and the welfare effects of this instability, generates a constant pressure on the state toward their management" (Chibber 2003, 14). However, Chibber, when describing post-World War II state development strategies, notes that the way that intervention took place was markedly different than previous attempts. In the post-war period, the state's "focus shift[ed] from *managing the effects* of accumulation to *accelerating its pace*" (Chibber 2003, 14). To do so, states began intervening not just in the environment in which firms work, but also in the operation of the firms themselves; to do that, they needed significant power. In South Korea, power was consolidated in the form of a military dictatorship and enhanced by a development strategy that allowed for significant latitude over firms: export-led industrialization.

For the purpose of understanding development strategy, the most important event in the pooling of power in the state began in 1961 with the coup d'état led by Major General Park Chung Hee. However, centralized authority in

the government was not new to the peninsula; prior to the coup, the country had seen little in the way of democratic government. The Japanese colonized Korea in 1910 and remained in control up to their defeat in World War II. Although a president was elected following the war, the intervening Korean War, American military presence, and student protests limited Syngman Rhee's effectiveness. By 1960 student protests toppled his government, and the replacement administration, led by Chang Myon, ended in 1961 when a coup d'état deposed the democratic government ("Background Note : South Korea" 2008). The military junta, headed by Park, consolidated power by holding elections immediately following his coup and did so again two years later to legitimize his new constitution. Amsden argues that Park's dictatorship would set the stage for economic development because, "without a strong central authority, a necessary although not sufficient condition, little industrialization may be expected in 'backwards' countries" (Amsden 1989, 18). Indeed, Park recognized that his "only claim to government [would be his] ability to create a sustainable mechanism to raise national income" and he set out organizing the junta to that end (Amsden 1989, 49). In his 1962 book, Park made plain his strategy: until "our poor economic power is greatly strengthened" little in the way of social goals could be achieved (qtd. in Amsden 1989, 49). His first attempt at jumpstarting the economy faltered, however, as it relied on a growth strategy of import substitution industrialization (ISI).

ISI, the common development logic of the 1950s, relied on a "doctrine of infant industry protection" (Chibber 2003, 32). By protecting new industry in a developing country, it was argued, firms would eventually build up products to international standards and accumulate capital by selling to the internal market.

Actual protection measures included trade barriers like tariffs and import restrictions, and “funnel[ling of] public funds to private firms” in the form of subsidies, tax breaks, etc. (Chibber 2003, 32).

When he came to power Park inherited an ISI-driven development policy from the outgoing administration, and he had “no intention” of changing strategy (Chibber 2003, 67). His First Five-Year Plan, enacted in 1961, was in the model of ISI, which offered two key benefits. First, it placated small businesses with forgiveness of debts and encouraged those firms to export products, but only insofar as they produced excess beyond what the internal market could support. Second, the funds gained from the limited exports of the small firms went to support a scheme of import substitution that offered big profits for “domestic industrialists” (Chibber 2003, 68). In protecting infant industry the state had “literally handed over [domestic industrialists entire sectors] free of international competition”(Chibber 2003, 34). Unfortunately for South Koreans, just two years after the First plan was implemented, the country had entered an economic crisis. A new, more modest, but still ISI-based, plan was introduced in 1963, however it was clear Park needed to identify a different economic development strategy (Chibber 2003, 69). He chose export-led industrialization (ELI).

Like ISI strategies, ELI requires heavy state involvement in making firms successful. The logic behind protecting firms under ISI is that without it, local organizations would be “decimated” by more efficient, better equipped international producers (Chibber 2003, 36). However, under ELI, the state offers significant support to local firms, in the form of tariffs and subsidies, but in return requires a minimum level of exports. Forcing firms to export offers

multiple advantages, including an inward flow of foreign hard currency and improvements in product quality as local companies are forced to produce to international standards to secure overseas customers (Chang 2003, 4). Thus, “in exchange for subsidies, the state has imposed performance standards on private firms,” a process called *discipline* in the developmental literature (Amsden 1989, 8).

The codification of an export-led strategy in South Korea began in early 1964 and was a part of the formal planning process by 1965. In outlining the received wisdom as to why the switch from ISI to ELI occurred in South Korea, Chibber highlights three key factors. First, during the ISI Five Year Plans, exports were consistently an economic “bright spot” (Chibber 2003, 70). Second, the country was experiencing a balance of payments “crisis” meaning it needed additional foreign currency (Chibber 2003, 70). Third, the U.S. was cutting back aid payments (Chibber 2003, 70). To these canonical explanations, Chibber adds a crucial factor: Japan. Japanese firms were ceding, to South Korean partners, sales infrastructure in the United States. Japan did so because increasing wages made its prices less competitive and because it encountered increased resistance (and consequently protectionist policies) to exports in the West (Chibber 2003, 72). With the addition of Japan, both the supply side (export requirements) and the demand side (Western customers looking for light manufactures) were accounted for in the trade equation.

With a strategy of ELI, and the subsequent discipline of firms, South Korea would soon see exceptionally rapid growth. However, the political ramifications of ELI should be briefly examined. Why would local capitalists accept the transition from a discipline-free regime to a disciplined one, and, more

importantly for understanding the conditions in which citizen journalism developed, what do those choices mean for the power of the state?

Amsden and Chibber take differing views as to why South Korean capitalists accepted ELI policies and the discipline that came with them. While Amsden contends that state had enough power relative to the business classes – that the social classes were weak and that business interests relied on state largess – to simply force them to adapt (Amsden 1989, 52), Chibber paints a more nuanced picture. In his interpretation, the acceptance represented a “pact” between the bourgeoisie and the state. He argues that because of Japanese off-loading of industries, industrialists needed, and in fact embraced, the disciplinary policies which doled out subsidies and forced investment that promoted increased productivity (Chibber 2003, 37, 82). Although they take different approaches to explain the path taken, both arrive at the same basic conclusion: that *the South Korean state, under ELI, wielded massive, and often coercive, power*. For example, in conjunction with nationalization of the banking system, the state could exercise significant power over firms that refused to play by the export rules. Money supplies for these firms would simply dry up (Chibber 2003, 54). Another key example of state power over firms was its ability to both collect information from, and then direct the action of firms for state-wide economic planning purposes. Indeed, every time a government bureaucrat pulled information out of “recalcitrant managers,” those managers were reminded that they were a part of a larger, state run project (Chibber 2003, 26).

Understanding the nature of the developmental state in South Korea is critical to comprehending the conditions under which citizen journalism

developed there. Two conditions that were critical for citizen journalism were a direct result of the ability of the developmental state to implement its policies. First, while press repression was a feature of the Korean peninsula far before the developmental state came to power, it was particularly intense under that regime; the Third, Fourth, and Fifth republics had a particular penchant and flair for restricting journalistic freedom. Second, the developmental state was exceptionally good at building modern infrastructure. While some argue that modern infrastructure development stems from the Japanese occupation of the peninsula, this thesis suggests that it began with the rule of Park Chung-hee.

## **4.2 The Ebb and Flow of Korean Press Freedom**

As noted above, repression of the press in Korea dates back to the very first publication printed in the country. It was not, however, a constant from the 16<sup>th</sup> century through to the collapse of the military government in 1987. Instead, Korea experienced periods of heavy repression, often followed by very short times of liberalization. Rather than repression itself acting as the cause of citizen journalism in Korea, I argue it is this “ebb and flow” that was crucial. The periodic, rapid expansions of freedom and the subsequent clamping-down by the state emboldened new journalists to continuously push for the kind of freedom that was displayed most drastically by OhmyNews in 2000. In addition, new forms of journalism, like the one that OhmyNews adopted, were attempted every time repression was relaxed.

### **4.2.1 Invention Versus Innovation**

In each period of freedom journalists did not invent new forms but instead were innovative; they actually put forms into practice. Amsden draws a useful distinction between the two when she notes that the two terms are

“intimately connected ... In textbook treatments of new technological development, invention is associated with the idea and comes first, followed by innovation or the application of the idea to commercial uses” (1989, 6). However, she also offers a modification that is instructive when examining the Korean press. In her study of South Korean industry and development, she treats the terms “not as abstract stages, one preceding the other in new technological discoveries, but rather as descriptions of particular historical periods, invention preceding innovation in an intergenerational sense” (Amsden 1989, 6). The historical analysis of the press in Korea will find this to be the case as well. As the following revisionist history of press freedom in South Korea will show, new generations of South Koreans grow up and are highly innovative during periods of press freedom; when the state allows such action they immediately put invention into practice.

#### **4.2.2 A Mixture of Freedoms**

While the Korean press experienced periods of freedom and repression from its inception (the press was mostly free up to the Japanese occupation in 1910, and then was free again under the Japanese “cultural policy,” during which time Koreans were particularly innovative, starting the two newspapers that are still prominent today) the most important period for understanding citizen journalism began with Japan’s defeat in the Pacific in 1945.<sup>4</sup>

Continuing the pattern of brief periods of productive press freedom emerging from longer times of heavy repression, the press grew rapidly under the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea’s (USAMGIK) liberal (but not totally free) stance towards the journalism. The official policy from the arrival of the

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<sup>4</sup> For a more complete history of the Korean press prior to 1945, please see <http://www.andrewgruen.com/earlykoreanpresshistory.pdf>

Americans in South Korea in 1945 is best summarized by the leader of U.S. forces there, Lieutenant General John R. Hodge: “Since the U.S. troops entered Korea, there now exists in Korea complete freedom of the press.” However, Hodge hedged his statement, noting that, “Freedom of the press and of expression should be employed to stimulate public discussion and to articulate the formation of public opinion... [I]n case of violation of public security, due measures will be considered” (qtd. in Youm 1996, 38). Under Hodge’s scheme, journalism in South Korea re-grew immediately: just weeks after USAMGIK took over, more than 68 new papers started and by 1946 South Korea was home to 273 periodicals (Youm 1996, 10).

The unique innovation of the 1945 growth-spurt was not altogether positive for USAMGIK. Labeled South Korea’s own “Yellow Journalism” – an allusion to the sensationalized and war-mongering news that was published during a circulation war between papers in New York City at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – many of these new South Korean publications were either pro-communist (or pro-reunification with the communist North) or simply subversive of USAMGIK (Youm 1996, 10). To cope with these periodicals, the Americans began regulating the press by requiring registration, but by May of 1946 opted for a licensing scheme via Ordinance 88. Although the official reason for the switch from registration to licensing was a shortage of newsprint, it was soon clear that the ordinance was designed to stamp out communist publications. No leftist paper was ever licensed (Youm 1996, 41). Ordinance 88 was not, however, broadly effective. Leftist papers continued to publish by buying the licenses of established papers. The Americans responded with the passage of a revised law that allows for the revocation of licenses for various



reasons including “if the publication is different from the licensed one” (Youm 1996, 42).

Although the American administration in Korea backtracked on some of its commitments to press freedom, the first democratic government, under Syngman Rhee would go even farther to stop free expression. While the constitution of the First Republic, signed into law on July 17, 1948, guaranteed freedom of the press,<sup>5</sup> the anti-communist Rhee government flagrantly disregarded the provision, closing left-leaning publications immediately upon taking office. By September 1948, the Rhee government issued a proclamation aimed directly at communist papers, prohibiting not just articles that “praise communism and the puppet government of North Korea” but also all “articles that defame the government” (qtd. in Youm 1996, 45). After closing the communist-leaning *Seoul Shinmun* in May of 1949, a Rhee administration spokesman justified the position of the First Republic: “Freedom of the press should not be interpreted as a way to destroy the government” (qtd. in Youm 1996, 45). The Rhee administration continued to close leftist papers, relying not just on his own decrees but the Newspaper Law of 1907<sup>6</sup> and Ordinance 88 as well, leaving no leftist periodicals in operation by the outbreak of the Korean war in 1950 (Kim 1992). Independent journalism was one of the first casualties of the war; all news was under heavy military censorship. Even after the armistice in 1953, the Rhee administration continued its policy of strict regulation, using Ordinance 88 as the “statutory mechanism” for the repression of newspapers (Youm 1996, 47). Although the Rhee government was no supporter of press

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<sup>5</sup> This freedom was heavily qualified. As translated by Youm: “Citizens shall not be subjected to any restrictions on the freedom of speech, press, assembly and association *except as specified by law.*” (Italics added, Youm 1996, 45).

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.andrewgruen.com/earlykoreanpresshistory.pdf> for details.

freedom, its repressive tendencies would not reach the heights of the military-controlled Third, Fourth, and Fifth republics.

#### 4.2.3 Free for a Day (Year)

The Second Republic, a parliamentary system governed by Premier Chang Myron, offered a final, brief episode of freedom just prior to the period of repression most important to the development of OhmyNews. After the Students Uprising of 1960 replaced the Rhee government, journalistic entrepreneurs again proved innovative and even more obviously irresponsible than the anti-state publications that flourished during the freedom under the USAMGIK. Although previous constitutions had made gestures towards freedom of the press, the Second Republic's offered much stronger protection that was respected in practice. One Korean expert noted that in the new document, "all 'except as provided by law' escape clauses [were] removed" (qtd. in Youm 1996, 49). Moreover, the document explicitly protected against the kinds of repression that had been prominent under both USAMGIK and the First Republic: "Licensing or censorship in regard to speech and press permit of assembly and association shall not be recognized" (qtd. in Youm 1996, 49). This freedom gave rise to about 1,000 new publications and brought the total number of reporters employed by periodicals to about 160,000 in just one year (Youm 1996, 49-50). However, as noted above, the primary journalistic innovation of this free period was a new kind of journalism-as-blackmail. One Korean professor noted, "few of the new 'publications' had printing facilities, and some had no fixed place of business. Many never printed a single edition; some distributed a few mimeographed sheets only." The "journalists" working for these publications simply "used their positions to extort sources" (qtd. in Youm 1996, 50).

#### 4.2.4 Maximum Repression

Between Major General Park Chung-hee's May 16, 1961 coup d'état and the fall of military government on June 29, 1987, the South Korean press entered a final, and particularly brutal, stage of repression before the free and innovative period that spawned OhmyNews. During military rule in South Korea, the International Press Institute noted that "the shifts in the fortunes of the [South Korean] press were directly related to the whims of the ruling elite and the changing cross currents of the political situations" (qtd. in Youm 1986, 870). Those whims became clear with the Military Revolutionary Committee's Decree 1, which ordered prior censorship of "all newspapers and magazine feature articles, comics, cartoons, editorials, photographs, and foreign news" (Youm 1996, 50). In addition, Park's government closed 49 of Seoul's 64 newspapers almost immediately after taking power (Kim 1992). While the military governments reigned, the press was to become so utterly subjugated that it would take on the moniker *Kwanje Ullon* (government-controlled media) until well into the process of democratization in the early 1990s (Yang 2000, 150). The legacy of the *Kwanje Ullon* played an important role in the minds of those who would start OhmyNews.

Rather than progressing chronologically through the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Republics, a better understanding of their "maximum repression" is to be had by categorizing repression into its three major types: legal, extralegal, and economic.

##### 4.2.4.1 Legal

###### 4.2.4.1.1 Park

While Park's Third and Fourth Republic regimes made use of all three types of repression, the legal mechanisms at work were the most advanced. Like

Decree 1 mentioned above, several early decrees aimed to prevent the dissemination of any “anti-revolutionary” opinions. Decree 4 listed nine warnings for reporters, including one that notes articles should not “damage public opinion” (qtd. in Youm 1996, 50). Decree 11 set minimum levels for the facilities of newspapers and news agencies, thereby limiting the publication and distribution of news only to the best-capitalized organizations. The Park government closed 834 publications under the decree (Youm 1996, 51). Enforcement was not limited to closures. In 1961 the Revolutionary Court sentenced three *Minjok Ilbo* executives to death for “advocating political and ideological doctrines similar to those of North Korea.” One was killed, and two had their sentences commuted to life in prison (Youm 1996, 51-52).

After ratifying a new constitution and beginning the Third republic in 1963, the Park government promulgated the Press Ethics Commission Act in an attempt to get journalists to engage in self-regulation (i.e. to chill speech with professional ethics).<sup>7</sup> When that largely failed, the Park government returned to direct regulation with the Martial Law Decree 1 of 1972. This forced a news blackout on 11 items including any questioning of the president’s decision to declare martial law and contained the spectacularly broad ban on “any article that is harmful to the national interest,” (qtd. in Youm 1996, 55).

Various measures enacted throughout the mid-1970s were designed to prevent any dissent over the newly formed Fourth Republic constitution, which effectively made Park a president-for-life. The Presidential Emergency Measure 1 of 1974, Decree 9 of 1975, and changes in the 1975 criminal code together

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<sup>7</sup> Additional discussion of the Press Ethics Commission Act under the economic repression section

made it illegal to criticize the new constitution at home, abroad, through foreigners, or foreign publications (Youm 1996, 56-57).<sup>8</sup>

Park also used laws not specifically targeted at the press to control the publication and dissemination of information deemed critical of his regime or harmful to its stability. One of the most used was the Anti-Communist Act. In one case, the Act was used to arrest a poet – who wrote a satirical piece about the misuse of power in South Korea – along with some executives of *Sasanggye* and *Minju Chonson*, where the poem was published. In another instance, two academics were arrested for publishing translations of essays about life in China (Youm 1986, 873-74; Youm 1996, 57-58).

#### 4.2.4.1.2 Chun

Just six weeks after the head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency assassinated Park on October 26 1979, General Chun Doo Hwan assumed power in another coup d'état (Kim 2005, xxi). The legal repression of the media was no less intense under the new Fifth Republic. The capstone of Chun's legal repression of the media was a single law, the Basic Press Act, promulgated in December of 1980. The act set professional qualifications for journalists, limitations on what information the government had to provide to reporters, explicitly denied of any kind of shield-law protection for reporters<sup>9</sup>, required registration, and defined press responsibility and publication facilities standards (Youm 1986, 871-73; Youm 1996, 59-60; Kim 1992). The responsibility clauses noted, amongst other things, that the “press shall not infringe upon ... public morality or social ethics,” and one of the registration clauses notes that

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<sup>8</sup> For English translations of these laws, see Youm 1996.

<sup>9</sup> (For a discussion of shield laws, see Chamberlin 2002, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t122.e0598>)

revocation was possible “when [a publication] repeatedly and flagrantly violate[s] the law in encouraging or praising violence or other illegal acts disrupting public order” (qtd. in Youm 1986). In addition, the Chun government instituted a massive structural reorganization of the media industry by amalgamating all independent news agencies into a single, state-run entity; absorbing two independent broadcasters into the state-run Korean Broadcasting System; and forbidding Seoul-based news organizations from permanently basing reporters in outlying regions, and vice versa (Kim 1992). Finally, Chun’s government issued daily reporting guidelines that dictated everything from acceptable stories and the slant papers should take on them, to the size and specific wording of headlines (Kim 1992; Youm 1996, 61-63).<sup>10</sup>

#### 4.2.4.2 *Extralegal*

Extralegal press repression in South Korea under both Park and Chun was common, and was typically carried out by the country’s intelligence service. Known as the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) under Park and the Korean National Security Planning Agency (KNSPA) under Chun, these services took to arresting and brutalizing reporters both as punishment for apparent law breaking and to chill freedom of expression by making extreme examples of individual cases. In one incident, the KCIA arrested five members of the Journalists Association of Korea for simply sending an uncensored dispatch to the International Press Institute in Zürich. In another, the editor of the *Korean Times* was apparently arrested and beaten by the KCIA after his paper published an article by an American freelancer that criticized the regime. The KCIA also

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<sup>10</sup> Some of these press guidelines were illegally published by the leftist magazine *Mal*, for which Oh Yeon Ho, the founder of OhmyNews, later worked. To see a translation of the published guidelines, see Youm 1996, 61-63

investigated two executives of the magazine *Changjo* for running a satirical poem that disparaged some of Park's subordinates (Youm 1996, 57). In a kind of repressive fusion, park utilized the KCIA to economically punish newspapers as well. The KCIA investigated *Dong-A Ilbo's* advertisers to penalize it for reporting criticism of the Park government (Kim 1992).

Chun, too, utilized extralegal means to shut down stories that were not to his liking. May 1983 offers, perhaps, the most extreme case of using physical violence to make an example of a journalist who went astray. A *Chosun Ilbo* reporter wrote a story on Kim Young Sam's (later to be President of a democratic South Korea) ongoing hunger strike against the government – a topic that had been explicitly banned by the Chun regime. The KNSPA liaison officer assigned to *Chosun Ilbo*, upon learning about the article, violently beat the reporter. Consequently, the rest of the paper's staff refused to work on the issue that carried the hunger-strike story (Youm 1996, 60; Youm 1986, 879). In a 1985 case, *Dong-A Ilbo* broke with the publishing guidelines on a story about a Chinese bomber that had landed in South Korea. Rather than reporting the government line – that the pilot would be allowed to defect to Taiwan and the radio operator would be returned to China – it questioned the acumen of the South Korean Air Force for not intercepting the plane when it entered its airspace. The director of the KNSPA brought three *Dong-A* staffers in, including the paper's editor, and had them beaten. The paper heeded future government admonishments to avoid reporting on how it had been punished for breaking rank (Youm 1996, 60-61). Creatively, Chun's government also found ways to use other, non-obvious government agencies to reach outside the law and stop dissent in the press. In one case, an American freelancer had photographs confiscated by customs

agents on his way out of the country. The pictures, of the 1980 Kwangju uprising, showed beaten labour and human rights activists and citizens protesting Chun's imposition of martial law. The customs agent's justification for the seizure was that the pictures "reflected the 'ugly side of [South] Korea' and that North Korea might use the pictures to attack its archenemy in the South" (Youm 1986, 880; Youm 1996, 61).

#### 4.2.4.3 *Economic*

In a state that viewed economic development as *the* goal, nationalized its banks, and successfully "disciplined" its entrepreneurs and capitalists there is surprisingly little documentation of the use of economic press repression. The examples that do exist are telling, however, and suggest that because of the subtleties involved economic repression might have been far more common than the limited historical record. Under Park, the most potent example is his standoff with *Dong-A Ilbo* and four other periodicals over the Press Ethics Commission Act in 1963-64. Park used the act to "[enhance] the effectiveness of self-regulation by the press and broadcasting" by making professional organizations agree not to publish certain stories including such provisions as "matters relating to respect for the reputation of heads of states at home and abroad" and "matters relating to guarantee or promotion of social ethics and public morality" (qtd. in Youm 1996, 53). When *Dong-A Ilbo* and the others defied the law, Park stopped all governmental subscriptions to the papers, increased the prices they paid for imported newsprint, restricted or rescinded all bank loans to the papers, stopped government advertising, and pressured private firms to avoid advertising in the papers (Youm 1996, 53). This brand of explicit economic discrimination might have been effective, but other cases, like



one under Chun, illustrate how discreet financial tools could be at silencing the press. When the *Segye Ilbo* newspaper published a story about an executive of the Tongil Group *chaebol* that paid off government officials to get a permit to build on a protected area, another company owned by the same group found itself under a tax audit that resulted in a \$4 million bill. British foreign correspondent Michael Breen, who was stationed in Seoul at the time, noted that it was the group executives that pressured *Segye Ilbo* to avoid breaking anti-government stories (Breen 1998, 156). Working through the advertisers, as Chun did with the Tongil Group and *Segye Ilbo*, there were likely hundreds of episodes of repression that simply went unrecorded.

#### 4.2.5 Democracy and the Final (and Current) Innovative Period

Democracy arrived in South Korea in June of 1987. Massive demonstrations, an upcoming presidential election, and the world spotlight that was already shining on Seoul for the impending Olympic games collided, resulting in the June 29<sup>th</sup> declaration by Chun that nearly all the demands of the pro-democratic protestors would be met – including the direct election of the new president. The new transitional administration under Roh Tae Woo would remove the three modes of media repression found under the Third, Fourth, and Fifth republics, and consequently saw an explosion of new media forms (Kim 2005; Larson 1995; Youm 1996; Youm and Salwen 1990). The introduction of mixed-mode broadcasting, brisk expansion of the entire media sector, and most importantly the launch of *Hankyoreh Shinmun* exemplify the journalistic innovation found in South Korea's first decade of freedom. Additionally, the structure employed by *Hankyoreh Shinmun* is useful in understanding the origins of OhmyNews itself.

#### 4.2.5.1 *Mixed-mode Broadcasting and Growth*

First, the government-controlled broadcasters that were centralized under the Chun regime were broken up and made to depend on advertising income for part of their programming budget. The Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) and the *Munhwa* Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) were once again separated, so as to compete with one another, but remained owned by the public. While KBS continued to receive government financial support, MBC was made totally dependent on advertising (Yang 2000, 157-58). This kind of “genuinely mixed” method of broadcasting – similar in many ways to other Western European nations like France’s 2 and 3 (where they are publicly owned yet have some advertising), or the UK system of both public and private channels competing alongside each other – helped to foster competition and increased access for the general public (Regourd 2001; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Semetko 1996; Yang 2000, 157). In addition to forcing public stations to compete for viewers via advertising, the introduction of cable in March of 1995 drastically increased competition (Yang 2000, 158). Alongside changes in television brought about by structural reforms in the government-owned broadcasters, the period that South Korean press commentator Kyu Ho Youm called a “Korean-style glasnost,” saw an explosion in the number of media organizations on a scale never before seen in the country (1996, 65). The number of daily newspapers doubled, to a total of 65, between late 1987 and April of 1989. In the same period, the total number of periodicals went from 2236 to 3728 (Youm 1996, 66). By June of 1992 there were 117 dailies, 1561 weeklies, and 2745 monthly publications (Yang 2000, 157). Between 1985 and late 1989 the number of radio stations jumped from 74 to 125 (Kim 1992).

The structural reforms, increased competition, and explosion of outlets alone, however, would have been inconsequential had the South Korean media still operated as the *Kwanje Ullon*. In addition to the change in colloquial name of the media in this period – to the *Chayool Ullon* (autonomous media) – empirical data show that the public's trust in and belief of what they read increased significantly. According to survey data collected and translated by the Korean media scholar Seung-Mock Yang, readers said newspapers were just 58.4 percent trustworthy in 1986, but by 1994 they had become 79.4 percent trustworthy. In the same timeframe television news went from 61.2 percent to 81.6 percent trustworthy (See Table 2 Yang 2000, 160). Interestingly, the data also show that along with the increase in trust, the public began to see the news media as filling a power vacuum left by the outgoing military government. Opinion surveys taken in the mid-1990s show that journalists were often perceived as being the second most powerful social group in South Korea, listing politicians as first and the powerful *chaebol* businessmen significantly farther behind (See Table 3 Yang 2000, 162). As suggested by numerous studies (Hovland and Weiss 1951; Sternthal, Phillips and Ruby 1978; Page, Shapiro and Dempsey 1987; Druckman 2001), this increase in trust likely increased the effectiveness of the messages mediated by the media.

#### **4.2.5.2 The Hankyoreh Shinmun**

While structural changes, expansion, and trustworthiness were key journalistic innovations of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the most important for understanding the development of citizen journalism was the creation of a new newspaper in 1988 called *Hankyoreh Shinmun*. Widely considered important for its politically progressive approach to the news in an exceptionally

conservative media environment, its mode of news production is even more significant to the understanding of OhmyNews' development (Jae Hoon 1989; Jae Hoon 1990; Youm and Salwen 1990; Kim 1992; Youm 1996; Han 2000; Yang 2000). The paper's founding principles have been translated by Han:

1. The paper (called *Hankyoreh Shinmun*) should be a progressive daily - its motto being *Minjok* (nation), *Minjung* (Korean version of subordinate class), *Minju* (democracy).
2. It had to be a national daily published on a scale similar to that of the established dailies. The market entry costs would be provided through a fundraising campaign.
3. The company was to be a limited company and the contributors were to be the stockholders. It had to reject any large individual investments in order to be independent from ownership control by media capital. It had to disperse the ownership completely among the general public. The maximum amount of investment was to be 1 percent of the total invested capital.
4. Financial resources would be based on both subscription fees and advertising revenue. (2000, 62)

The paper managed to successfully reach each of these four goals, and in so doing provided a strong example for OhmyNews to follow. First, the paper maintained its progressive approach to news – which OhmyNews would adopt, famously shown in its coverage of the Roh Moo-hyun election and protests of the U.S. Status of Forces Agreement. In his content analysis of *Hankyoreh Shinmun*, Han found that even in the face of increased advertiser pressure to become more centrist, the paper continued to promote progressive policies and stories. For example, the number of column centimetres per day allocated to “the Progressive Movement and Related Issues” (including the labour movement, national unification, and anti-military dictatorship) did not fluctuate more than 10 percent from the 1988 norm for the paper's first four years in print (See

Table 3 2000, 69). In another example from the same time period, the paper's ratio of positive to negative coverage of the "Blue-Collar Worker's Labour Movement" never fluctuated more than one percent from its average of 98.275 percent positive (See Table 4 Han 2000, 70). Second, the paper proved that a progressive approach to news had a market. At its 1988 launch, *Hankyoreh Shinmun* had 61,888 shareholders – of which "at least 85.95 percent was middle class or middle class minded" – and had raised \$24 million (Han 2000, 64). It started with a circulation of about 300,000, immediately making it the third most-circulated paper in South Korea, and managed reach an audience that was "no different" from the established, quality, papers: "The income level of the readers was similar to that of their counterparts of the established 'qualities,' and their educational level was rather higher than that of the readers of the established papers" (qtd. in Han 2000, 64). Third, with its large and commercially attractive audience, *Hankyoreh Shinmun* showed that a progressive paper didn't have to fall victim to the fate of "moderation," to fund itself with advertising as suggested by Curran's study of progressive British papers (Curran 2002). Instead it could readily collect advertising revenue even when some businesses had a particular distaste for it: South Korean communication scholar Lee Sang-Hee went so far as to note that "some sponsors do not give advertising because they *hate* the paper" (Italics added, qtd. in Han 2000, 68). Finally, and critically, the paper showed how to involve citizens in the news making process. While the digital technologies were not available to allow anyone to write and submit stories, input was collected from *many* more sources than in traditional news organizations. Because so many middle-class citizens (as opposed to a few large investment organizations, venture capitalists, etc.) had invested in

*Hankyoreh Shinmun*, the paper was forced to create a system to accept their feedback. This happened monetarily, through additional capital campaigns in later years (Han 2000, 65). Additionally, feedback was collected when shareholders requested methods of representation in decision-making processes. However the advice was not always taken, which led to fewer donations (Han 2000, 71). *Hankyoreh Shinmun* further blended roles, as OhmyNews would do, by shaking up the traditional internal structure of a newspaper. Instead of a hierarchy with editors at the top, reporters were regularly involved in editorial decisions (Youm 1996, 66).

Journalistic innovation in the post-1987, pre-digitization period was, unquestionably, extensive. It would, however, accelerate when the country invested in telecommunications infrastructure, particularly that which supported the Internet. Just as history was key to understanding innovation in the Korean press up to the mid-90s, it will prove critical to unlocking how South Korea ended up with the highest levels of broadband penetration in the world by the early 2000s.

### **4.3 Infrastructural Inertia**

The innovative periods in the history of the Korean press were tied directly to the state, and so too were the major infrastructural achievements that made possible what commentator James F. Larson called the “information society” in South Korea (Larson 1995). While the South Korean state took a holistic approach to the promotion of the information society, for the purposes of this account its actions are forcibly divided into two major categories: direct investment in physical infrastructure (of which there is a long, successful history) and a plethora of strategies aimed at what Junmo Kim called “demand

creation” policies (Kim 2006, 379). Demand creation – particularly important for the introduction of Internet services – can be further divided into policies that modified government agencies or large business and those that were designed to operate on the level of the family or individual.

#### **4.3.1 A History of Successful State-Led Physical Infrastructure Projects**

Some give credit to the Japanese “modernization” for starting infrastructural development in Korea. As Amsden notes, Mason argues, “Japanese colonial rule laid some of the key foundations for Korea’s ... economic growth” (Amsden 1989, 32; Mason et al. 1980, 75). However, many of those same studies also suggest that the “withdrawal of Japanese technicians and managers, and the loss of Japanese markets,” decimated the economy and what “physical capital that the Japanese did leave behind was destroyed by the Korean War” (Mason et al. 1980, 77).<sup>11</sup> As such, this history of infrastructure in relation to the development of an information society begins with the major rebuilding of the country commenced by Park’s military regime. Two projects are particularly relevant because they were major leaps forward in physical infrastructure and represented intangible, almost patriotic benefits for South Koreans. The Seoul-Pusan highway was the biggest of Park’s early physical infrastructure projects and helped to build the revolution in South Korean industry. As Reinfeld and Steers document, the highway project helped to cement infrastructure building into the mindset of the South Korean state (Reinfeld 1997; Steers 1999).<sup>12</sup> As the highway jump-started transportation infrastructure, the TDX digital telephone

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<sup>11</sup> For further discussion, see (Amsden 1989, 31-35)

<sup>12</sup> Other key industrial and transportation infrastructure projects would follow, including a 10-year plan to build harbors, industrial estates and ports in the 1970s. The state also built 300 miles of highways in the south – between 1973 and 1978 road capacity increased 11.5 percent per year, but the number of cars grew by 18.4 percent per year – and installed Seoul’s subway system (Reinfeld 1997, 5).

switching system promoted telecommunications development. The internal development of a switching system in South Korea pushed the country from one where individual businesses could not get phones to one that would be called the bandwidth capital of the world in 2002 (Herz 2002; Larson 1995, 62). This history of state-led physical infrastructure projects helped prepare South Korea for citizen journalism because it set up the state as a primary actor in building infrastructure.<sup>13</sup> More important to its development, however, were the demand creation policies the state undertook once it had built the phone and data networks in the Fifth Five Year Plan starting in 1982.

#### 4.3.2 Driving Demand

##### 4.3.2.1 Pre-World Wide Web

The South Korean state's primary strategies for promoting telecommunications usage in the pre-World Wide Web era<sup>14</sup> were a massive restructuring of the industry players to increase competition (and thereby the quality of service etc.), while simultaneously providing direct-to-individual educational opportunities.

To build services for business and consumers, the state established two firms: Korea Telecom (KT) and Data Communications Corporation (DACOM). The state, which wholly owned KT for approximately its first decade, originally separated it from the Ministry of Communications in an effort to make it “operate more like a private corporation with less restrictive supervision and increased decision-making speed” (Larson 1995, 127). As a government-owned

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<sup>13</sup> For a detailed treatment of both the Seoul-Pusan highway and the TDX phone switching system, see <http://www.andrewgruen.com/pavementandcopper.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> This is a specific usage of the term World Wide Web – the WWW, invented by Tim Berners-Lee at CERN is often credited as the technology that popularized the Internet and made it accessible to the general public. While pre-WWW strategies involved teaching about arcane access methods like Bulletin Board Systems and USENET, real growth was found in voice and fax service.



company, KT had various public service requirements including “establishing and operating telecommunications facilities, engaging in research and development, [and] developing manpower for the sector” (Reinfeld 16). Despite its public-service remit, however, KT was also highly profitable. The revenues it generated, 76 percent of which came from local and long-distance calling, “were the principal single source of capital to finance [South] Korea’s telecommunications development in the 1980s” (Larson 1995, 128). Interestingly, after DACOM began competing with KT in the long-distance sector, traffic *and* revenues increased (Larson 1995, 129). Unlike the creation of KT, which was essentially a reorganization of a government ministry into a public-service corporation, DACOM was started from nothing by the state. Although DACOM was mostly private (KT owned 33 percent), it still had specific, and in some ways more monumental, tasks defined by the government, including the building of “information and communications network businesses,” (Reinfeld 16) in a country that, at that time, had only about 800 computers with 10,000 terminals (Larson 1995, 72). DACOM introduced a flurry of services including the DACOM-Net Service (DNS), which grew at a spectacular rate – thanks in part to the uptake of Bulletin Board Service (BBS) by students. In addition, DACOM expanded data services across the country, connecting 21 locations by 1986 and 48 by 1992 (Larson 1995, 73).

Alongside structuring the companies in the sector to provide more services, the South Korean state provided educational programs designed to increase demand for telecommunications services. The Information Culture Center (ICC), one of the earliest training centres, opened in 1985. It began with a course designed to create Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

specialists from those who had not studied computer science. It opened 18 “rural computer education facilities” where residents could learn to use “personal computers, printers, overhead projector, television, and video cassette recorders” for free. When the ICC failed to find enough ICT-trained teachers it both added ICT instruction into the standard teacher-education programs, and created a seasonal class that trained more than 1,200 teachers in just two years. The ICC did more than reach new rural users; by 1992 it had trained more than 11,000 office workers from 140 different organizations to use ICTs for office automation. The ICC even created its own educational blitz in the media: it launched a quarterly magazine, *Information Culture*, that was distributed in government offices and commissioned and broadcast three cartoon episodes for children called *The Running Future Express* (Larson 1995, 165-67).

#### **4.3.2.2 Post-World Wide Web**

In the post-World Wide Web era the South Korean state added a few new levers to its demand creation toolkit. Restructuring the sector remained important, but was implemented in a much less radical way. Education programs were continued with the same gusto as those that started in the 1980s. In addition to the proven policies, the state also set specific service goals and coordinated private companies to reach them. It also helped to define the consumer marketplace by creating a marketable certificate scheme.

When the South Korean state separated Korea Telecom (KT) from the Ministry of Communications and created the competing DACOM, it effectively created the telecommunications sector in the country. By the mid-1990s, however, the sector was well established and growing, as evidenced by the

rapidly increasing teledensity.<sup>15</sup> As such, state-led restructuring during the post-World Wide Web era was significantly less severe. Two programs, one which decreased barriers to market entry for Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and another that promoted small technology firms, are illustrative of the state's structural policies at this time.

Rapid deregulation of the telecommunications industry began in about 1990. The state licensed multiple carriers to compete directly in the same local and long-distance calling sectors, which rapidly improved the telephone networks themselves. Consequently, the physical infrastructure needed for broadband providers to make "last mile" connections to homes was, literally, waiting for ISPs to exploit. Additionally, ISPs were very lightly regulated, resulting in an explosion of Internet offerings. By 2000, there were 55 distinct ISPs in the country, many of which were offering speeds that were far in excess of what was available elsewhere (8Mbps) and significantly lower prices (\$US 33/month) (Kim, Moon and Yang 2004, 4).

In addition to easing market-entry for ISPs, and thereby providing more consumer choice, the state also offered preferential treatment to small technology-oriented companies in an effort to further increase competition. The Special Law for the Promotion of Venture Businesses (SLPVB) enacted in 1997 is highlighted by Kim, Moon, and Yang as the "most notable" of such policies. If small businesses met the state's definition of "venture businesses" – essentially if the business is "based on a patented, leading-edge technology and high R&D" – they would qualify for both tax benefits and direct financial assistance. Many

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<sup>15</sup> For more on the rapidly expanding teledensity in South Korea see <http://www.andrewgruen.com/pavementandcopper.pdf>

such businesses received government support. In 2001 the state gave more than 1 percent of GDP to such small businesses; in that year, the state financed about 90 percent of total venture capital. This focused support of small business drastically increased the number of ICT firms in the country. While there were 2,000 small firms in 1998, there were 10,182 in 2002, half of which were in ICT fields (Kim, Moon and Yang 2004, 4-5).

As in the 1980s, education programs remained key state policy for demand creation. In addition to many of the efforts that began earlier, two programs of the 1990s and 2000s are of particular note because they aim to educate the *entire population*. The state connected every primary and secondary school to high-speed Internet. It simultaneously embarked on massive-scale training for those who were older. Universal connectivity in primary and secondary schools ensured that regardless of other geographic or economic disadvantage, curriculums could include Internet-based activities, and that students could expect to use it in all their coursework. They would, in effect, grow up with the Internet (Kim, Moon and Yang 2004, 5). More impressive, however, was the Ten Million People Internet Education project. Started in 2000, this program aimed to teach “basic skills for computer and internet use” to ten million South Koreans in two years time. Stay-at-home-mothers were identified as key recipients of the program’s training funds. The state “[recognized] that the housewives have a strong influence on household purchase decisions and are also very interested in the education of their children” and as such provided special courses and subsidies to that group (Kim, Moon and Yang 2004, 5).

In addition to the competitive and educational policies that represented continuations of 1980s-era strategy, the state also introduced service goals, most notably in the form of the Korean Information Infrastructure (KII) plan. The 1993 KII was a tripartite initiative, with mandates by the state for itself, the public sector (firms), and the testbed (research institutes). The government's responsibility was for KII-G (Government), which involved building the backbone network for the country. To enable service across the country, it built a high capacity fibre optic transmission network that connected 144 cities in the country at speeds between 155Mbps – 40Gbps with plans to enter the 1000Gbps range. For context, the average broadband connection in the United Kingdom was 3.6Mbps (or just .00009 percent of the KII-G's speed goals) as of January 2009 ("Uk Broadband Speeds 2008 : Research Report" 2009). The KII-P (public sector) involved a series of regulations that set goals for consumer oriented services. Under it, telecommunications companies were required to provide broadband Internet for individuals and businesses. Moreover, requirements stipulated that 80 percent of households must have access to, at minimum, a 20Mbps connections. Finally, the KII-T (testbed) was a series of investments by the government and private carriers into research on how to expand the current state of fibre optic networks, particularly so that new capacity goals to be set in the future that used the existing fibre (Lee and Chan-Olmsted 2004, 658-59).

Finally, to create demand the state introduced a certificate scheme that real estate developers could use to market their properties as being more connected than others. Called the Cyber Building Certificate system and started in May of 1997, it issued marketable certificates to buildings with broadband Internet access that used simple rankings of the speeds on offer. New real estate

developers could use these certificates as a selling point for particular accommodation. In addition, the state increased demand by requiring builders of large apartment complexes to install networks that met certain certificate standards; roughly 48 percent of housing in South Korea are such large apartment buildings. Not only did this enhance demand for services by creating guaranteed customers for data connections, but it also provided broadband to a huge proportion of the population (Lee and Chan-Olmsted 2004, 659-60).

The efforts by the state to improve access to broadband Internet across the country were massively successful. By the middle of 1999 through to late 2004, broadband penetration rates (as measured by subscribers per 100 people) were higher in South Korea than anywhere else in the world ("Indicator Gapminder Gdp\_Per\_Capita\_Ppp; Lindgren 2008). By 2002, the year of Roh Moo-hyun's election, subscription rates in South Korea had reached 25 subscribers per 100 people. This penetration rate was not achieved in the United Kingdom until 2007, and even then the connections there were qualitatively inferior as the South Korean government's definition of broadband was more than twice as fast as that of the British ("Top 30 Economies in Terms of Broadband Subscribers Per 100 Population, 2007; Joyce 2007, 11, Footnote 25).

#### **4.4 Mixing Freedom and Broadband: A Second Wave of Innovation**

When OhmyNews launched on February 2, 2000 at 2:22 p.m., it did so in the midst of a new wave of communications innovations in South Korea. The country had experienced more than a decade of constantly decreasing government repression, alongside a meteoric rise in Internet-based connectivity. These two forces launched a revival in media innovation, of which OhmyNews was just one part. Given the power of these two forces (freedom/democracy and

infrastructure/new media), it would be surprising to find that citizen journalism was the only new form of social relations and, as the historical record shows, this was not the case. OhmyNews was not the only new form to be created from the mixture of freedom and infrastructure, bolstering the argument that both conditions were necessary for the development of such organizations. It shows how these two forces were powerful agents of change formation in South Korea.

#### 4.4.1 Early Forms

One of the first illustrations of freedom and Internet infrastructure's power to shape social relations in South Korea were the Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) frequented by students in the late 1980s. Students were some of the first in the country to experience the boom in PC use, which accelerated greatly with the expansion of DACOM services in 1986. While general Internet use was growing, it was dwarfed relative to the growth of BBSs fueled by students. These grew between 200 and 300 percent annually, and were used as forums for discussion of all topics imaginable (Larson 1995, 73). In addition, many such individuals were also active participants in politically radical e-mail lists like the Solidarity of Progressive Network Group (SPNG). One user of these early communication forms described the activities, noting that "the community services were very strong ... Community members formed a kind of connection through casual meeting, online chatting, study groups and etc." (Hauben 2006). The proliferation of BBSs and e-mail lists amongst student groups in the 1980s is particularly interesting insofar as the "386 generation" that played a crucial role in the democratization movement and later in the formation of OhmyNews, was collaborating on the Internet from its inception.

While the next section will detail precisely how prior repression and connectivity mixed to propel OhmyNews to the fore, this section will discuss the climate of the period, highlighting key innovations in the way people related to one another in the post-repression, post-infrastructure expansion climate. The CAGE movement, Red Devils fan club, and Rhosamo offer distinct examples of how, contemporaneous to the launch of OhmyNews, social relationships were being directly shaped by the power of freedom and Internet.

#### **4.4.2 Political Organization Offline and Online**

The Citizens' Alliance for the 2000 General Election (CAGE) movement was one of the first documented instances of South Koreans using the Internet to collaborate and discuss public affairs. In the run up to the April 13, 2000 general election, CAGE sought to radically alter South Korean politics by “[replacing] corrupt, incompetent, opportunistic, and self-serving politics with well-qualified fresh faces with impeccable backgrounds.” Their tactic was to publish a blacklist in an effort to “publicize the unacceptable characteristics of potential candidates in order to pressure parties not to nominate such individuals, and also to motivate voters to defeat those blacklisted if they were nominated” (Shin 2003, 702). By the end of its first month in existence (January 2000) CAGE, in collaboration with 450 member organizations, published a blacklist of 66 politicians across all parties that were “unfit to be nominated” (Shin 2003, 703). This initial list included even prominent politicians, such as Kim Jong Pil who was head of his party and a former prime minister.<sup>16</sup> Just days after releasing its

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<sup>16</sup> Shin has compiled complete lists of actions that resulted in the blacklisting of a particular politician. Some of these include: “conviction for taking bribes, conviction for violating election laws, provocation of regional animosity to obtain support from voters in a specific region, frequent switching of party affiliation, speculative investment in real estate, serving as a member



first list, CAGE published another with 47 new names. Digital communication was critical to CAGE's promotion of the blacklist. Web sites were created to help organize the defeat of candidates and leaders made heavy use of e-mail lists to contact individual voters (Joyce 2007, 21). CAGE was broadly successful. Of the 89 individuals blacklisted at the end of its campaign, 59 lost the election and 15 of the 22 "most problematic" candidates were amongst the losers (Shin 2003, 710). While the Internet was not the *single, central* feature of CAGE (other publications, particularly traditional newspapers were crucial in disseminating the list), it helped to connect like-minded individuals. In less than two years time, however, the Internet would become the sole space for some social groups in South Korea.

#### 4.4.3 Community Building Online

One such group was the Red Devils soccer fan club. The club was created in 1997 under the name The Great Hankuk Supporters Club, to be a cheering organization for the South Korean national soccer team. Soon after its founding, the name was switched to Red Devils, in a process that is illustrative of the ways in which the Internet was used to fashion the community. The group started a naming conversation that "[collected] public views through e-mail bulletins" (qtd. in Hauben 2006). The group became particularly active, however, during the 2002 World Cup. As a co-hosting nation, proximity to the event itself helped raise excitement and the online world of the Red Devils created new, nationwide, collective forms of experience. South Koreans turned to the Internet for raw information. The *Korea Herald* reported, "Online users scoured the Web to absorb detailed real-time match reports, player-by-player descriptions, disputes

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of the National Security Council's legislative committee under the authoritarian regime of Chun Doo Hwan, taking expensive foreign trips, and making statements unbecoming to a lawmaker."

about poor officiating and other soccer information” (qtd. in Hauben 2006). In addition, they used the Internet to collaborate and create a community. The *Herald* noted, “Instant messenger also played a role in spreading real-time news and lively stories to millions of people. Korea has more than 10 million instant messenger users and many of them exchanged views and feelings about World Cup matches” (qtd. in Hauben 2006). The Internet also helped move people to action, because it “raised public awareness about soccer and [through organizations like the Red Devils] prompted millions of people to participate in outdoor cheering campaigns” (qtd. in Hauben 2006). The total number of people estimated to have participated in the cheering campaigns organized by the Red Devils was in excess of 24 million. This kind of collective action facilitated by the Internet was immediately recognized as important to the country; *it was directly compared to the 1987 protests that brought military rule to an end*. The *Hankyoreh Shinmun* published an editorial that described the events: “What we had experienced at that moment was the experience of becoming a ‘Great One’”<sup>17</sup> (Hauben 2006). Much like OhmyNews, the Red Devils created a community in the online world that would build something in the offline world as well. The clearest similarity between the two is the 2002 presidential election. Where during the World Cup the Red Devils took their cheering from Instant Messaging windows and Web sites onto the streets, during the election OhmyNews took political argumentation online into the real-world voting booth.

#### **4.4.4 Political Community Building Online**

The CAGE movement was undoubtedly political, but it existed both online and offline. The Red Devils were online, but organized their community around a

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<sup>17</sup> See Hauben 2006 for a full translation of this article. It argues that the nature of this communal experience was very different than in the past.

subject that already had broad-based support. *Rohsamo* was different; this political organization *created* a community online. More critically, it called people to action, helping to elect Roh to the presidency of South Korea in 2002 despite being universally considered a long shot. *Rohsamo* (sometimes Romanized as *Nosamo* and meaning ‘those who love Roh’) was an online fan club for the politician Roh Moo-hyun that began before his presidential campaign, on April 15, 2000 (Hauben 2006; Kim, Moon and Yang 2004, 5). By April 25<sup>th</sup>, the group had 300 members, and by the end of the month had exceeded the limit for free Web hosting. Group members contributed to start independent hosting in May (Kim, Moon and Yang 2004, 5). The presidency was not *Rohsamo*’s original goal, instead it sought to help “people disillusioned with the political process in [South] Korea ... [identify] with Rho Moo-hyun’s new political vision for a participatory democracy beyond regional divisions rifting South Korean Politics” (Kim, Moon and Yang 2004, 5). However, as the membership of the group grew, and the presidential election loomed, backing from the group helped Roh to win the presidential nomination of his party, the Millennium Democratic Party in a popular primary – a first for South Korea. It did so by using its own Web sites to promote Roh’s candidacy and preparing literature that could be, and were, easily posted to other sites across the Web including OhmyNews (Hauben 2006). *Rohsamo* was also critical to the general election. When a key supporter backed out of a coalition with Roh the night before the election, club members actively campaigned on Roh’s behalf online. As exit-poll results came in throughout election day and it was clear that Roh was losing due to low youth turnout, *Rohsamo* actively recruited additional voters to the polls using “Internet chatting rooms, online communities and instant messaging services” (Hauben 2006).

## 4.5 The Birth of OhmyNews

It was in this environment that OhmyNews came to be. This section describes the operation of OhmyNews and argues that it germinated and became successful (widely read, politically influential and economically sustainable) because the long-term conditions of repression and infrastructure collided with a group of individuals who, motivated directly by repressive past, took up a new form of arms: the community-building Internet.

### 4.5.1 OhmyNews: Vital Statistics

OhmyNews opened to the public on February 2, 2000 at 2:22 p.m. with a bold statement by its founder Oh Yeon Ho:

“Born in the spring of the new millennium, OhmyNews declares it is making a complete departure from the media culture of the 20th century. We are going to change the culture of how news is produced, distributed, and consumed, all at one time. Every citizen's a reporter. Journalists aren't some exotic species, they're everyone who seeks to take new developments, put them into writing, and share them with others.”(Oh 2004)

OhmyNews aimed to let anyone tell any story he or she thought was important; with the caveat that it had to be factual. From its inception, the site has employed professional editors to check stories as they came in.

OhmyNews' operates by cultivating and encouraging a community of non-professionals to write stories and submit them to the site. Contributors receive about \$2 (£1.27) for most articles published on the site, but stories that are promoted to the main page by the editorial staff receive approximately \$20 (£12.77). In addition, readers can “tip” contributors who they like, up to \$54 (£34.47) (Woyke 2009; Gillmor 2006, 126; Hua 2007; Joyce 2007, 15). The professional staff publish approximately 70 percent of stories they read, most of which “go into issues that the mainstream media haven't covered” according to

Jeong Woon Hyeon, the site's chief editor (Gillmor 2006, 127). It also covers issues that might not even be considered news in other publications. One of the site's most popular authors writes "part confessionals, part advice columns, with headlines like 'Daddy's depressed, son's taking tests, and I'm worried,'" (Hua 2007). Yet the site remains like a newspaper, covering daily political, economic and social events, alongside lifestyle pieces like movie reviews ("Ohmynews" 2009).

Over the near-decade since it began, OhmyNews has grown robustly. At launch in February of 2000, the site had 727 "citizen reporters," a staff of four, and 64,000 readers. In September of 2000, the number of citizen reporters rose to 5,000, and by May of 2006 approximately 42,000 individuals contributed on a regular basis (Joyce 2007, 36-37). In March of 2009, there were more than 70,000 active citizen reporters (Woyke 2009). Over 70 percent of these citizen reporters are between 20-39 years of age, with a roughly even distribution between 20-29 and 30-39 (Joyce 2007, 36-37). The staff has grown as well, reaching 53 in 2003 and peaking at 95 in 2006 (Joyce 2007, 16). As of May 2009, the site had a total staff of 80, including roughly 35 reporters who supplement the stories written by non-professional citizens. Most of that staff was in their 30s-40s, and there was a slight majority of men to women (Hunter, Lee and Oh 2009). The most recent readership numbers, from March 2009, indicate that OhmyNews averages 2.5 million page views per day, placing it in the top 30 traffic generating South Korean Web sites (Woyke 2009).

The event most important to OhmyNews' growth was the 2002 presidential election in South Korea. The site launched itself to international prominence for its coverage, when it publicized the efforts of citizens working to

elect a left-leaning president, Roh Moo-Hyun, who had been shut out of traditional media. In this widely documented collaboration, which was discussed above, Roh supporters published messages and garnered support of youth voters via OhmyNews. After Roh won the election, he tacitly acknowledged OhmyNews' importance by granting the organization his first interview (Gillmor 2006; Hauben 2006; Hua 2007; Joyce 2007; Kim, Moon and Yang 2004).

#### **4.5.2 How Repression, Infrastructure, and Politics Formed OhmyNews**

The founders of OhmyNews were a part of the group of democratizers motivated directly by past government repression, the so-called "386-generation" which is well documented in the literature (Hauben 2008; Kim and Hamilton 2006; Gluck 2003). Their title is a double entendre. It simultaneously references the computer chip popular with early PC enthusiasts – the 80386 – and refers to a group who were in their 30s, educated in the 1980s, and were born in the 1960s. The 386ers "formed the main axis of resistance to the military regime in the 1980s" and were relatively affluent, making them very likely to have been participants in the BBSs discussed above (Kim and Hamilton 2006, 553). Their participation in the democratization movement in 1987 is the key to understanding how they took up the forces of press-freedom and innovation along with the newfound power of community building made possible on the Internet. *Paradoxically, the strong South Korean state gave the founders of OhmyNews both the motivation to write their own news articles – as the repression found under the Chun regime was particularly harsh and the innovative period following democratization particularly long – and the means to*

*do so on a national scale in the form of massive Internet infrastructure and training schemes.*

This paradoxical statement is borne out by the founder himself. Oh Yeon Ho said, "My generation, the 386 generation, were in the streets fighting in the 80s against the military dictatorship. Now, 20 years later, we are combat-ready with our internet," (Gluck 2003). Oh, who was a former journalist for *Mal*, the underground magazine that publicized the reporting guidelines under Chun, and had spent a year in prison for his pro-democracy protests under the military government. Upon starting OhmyNews he said that he looked back on both the new journalistic innovations of the late 1980s and on the new technology available to him and saw an opening. He said that traditional media in his country was not holding power to account in the way that the 386-generation had hoped when they brought democracy to the country, and that he would start a new news organization to combat it: "the journalists who started this campaign before us created *The Monthly Mal* and *The Hankyoreh*, but experience taught us that it would not be enough. Technology has been developing at nonstop pace, the world has changed, and readers have changed" (Oh 2004). To conduct this warfare with traditional media and take advantage of these changes, Oh developed a simple strategy that ensured collaboration with and amongst others that shared his political views. Instead of hiring a core group of reporters, he realized that South Korean citizens were more politically progressive than the media that they read. Thus his, "every citizen's a reporter," would result in more progressive news. Additionally, he used the language of warfare to describe how technology would enable production of news by such citizens calling them "news guerillas." While the "every citizen's a reporter" motto was not new (he used it

when he trained journalists during his time with *Mal*), it was newly applied to a news organization. Thus, one of his founding goals, to “abolish the threshold to being a reporter,” was actually long in coming. He was able to achieve it by using technology to spread “OhmyNews’ editorial offices ... [across] the country’s PC *bangs*” (Korean for Internet cafes). Using the Web, he designed an “automated editing system ... that [allowed] people to post articles from anywhere in the world” (Oh 2004).

While Oh found initial success for his new publication, gaining readers and citizen journalists before he even made the Web site publically available, political events helped to solidify OhmyNews as a regular news source for readers, thereby securing ad revenue and giving the organization a future. The critical event was the election campaign of Roh Moo Hyun, discussed above. As Oh describes it, OhmyNews allowed a group of dispersed individuals to collaborate. He said, “In the past, the conservative papers in [South] Korea could – and did – lead public opinion. They had the monopoly. They were against Roh Moo Hyun’s candidacy. But OhmyNews supported the Roh Moo Hyun phenomenon, with all netizens<sup>18</sup> participating. In our battle between the conservative media and the netizens of [South] Korea, the netizens won” (qtd. in Gluck 2003; Hauben 1996). That Roh was a presidential candidate helped to legitimize and solidify OhmyNews’ place as well. His first post-election interview was not with any major international news organization, the state broadcaster KBC, or even the large and influential newspapers in Seoul. Instead, he spoke to

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<sup>18</sup> Netizens is a concept originally defined by Michael Hauben: “The term Netizen has spread widely since it was first coined. The genesis comes from net culture based on the original newsgroup naming conventions. ... The word citizen suggests a geographic or national definition of social membership. The word Netizen reflects the new non-geographically based social membership. So I contracted the phrase [from Usenet] net.citizen to Netizen.” (Hauben 1996).



OhmyNews. The shine of a newly elected president was bestowed upon OhmyNews.

Thus OhmyNews must be understood in its historical context. Powerful, long working forces of repression and infrastructure, both of which emanated from a strong state, collided head on with a democratization movement and were catalyzed by a national election. Looking at the development of citizen journalism in this way suggests why it has been so difficult to recreate it elsewhere. The critical components, along with timing, might have been unique to South Korea. However, in order to more fully illustrate the uniqueness of these circumstances, this paper now turns to a brief discussion of two negative cases. OhmyNews attempted to build an organization in Japan, another developmental state in the same region, and it failed to achieve a critical mass of readers and writers. In Taiwan, yet another similar state, no significant attempts at citizen journalism appeared.

## **5 Comparative Negative Cases: Japan and Taiwan**

Japan and Taiwan represent critical comparative cases for this study of citizen journalism because of their apparent similarity to South Korea on the key causal factors identified above. Like South Korea, both countries had what have been called developmental states that were heavily engaged in economic development through the manipulation of markets, getting prices “wrong,” and promoting exports. Indeed, Japan is considered the prototype of the “Asian Tiger” developmental state; Taiwan is striking in both the qualitative similarity to South Korea’s developmental state and to the timing of its rise and collapse. Additionally, both Japan and Taiwan experienced one of the key factors

emanating from the developmental state: press repression. Moreover, all three countries are intimately linked, as they were once part of the Japanese empire and remain essentially, culturally, Asian. Finally, Japan is a particularly “conspicuous” case for examination because the same entrepreneurs that started OhmyNews in South Korea attempted to build a citizen journalism organization there and failed. Thus, these cases show conditions that are *prima facie* similar to those in South Korea. What each will show on closer examination, however, is that the removal of just one of the conditions identified in South Korea appears to be enough to kill any prospects of developing citizen journalism.

Each country offers its own answer in support of the above argument for South Korea. Japan democratized *significantly* earlier than the other states, as it was occupied by the United States after World War II. Thus, Japan highlights the need for a democratization movement to be timed alongside both the liberalization of the press and introduction of broadband infrastructure. Taiwan was remarkably similar to South Korea in its democratization process, leaving its military government behind just months after its neighbours. However, Internet infrastructure is just now (2009) reaching the levels it was in South Korea when citizen journalism appeared there; Taiwan lags South Korea in this regard by nearly a decade.

This section will proceed by introducing the *prima facie* similarities of all three countries: the developmental state and past press repression. It will continue with a brief discussion of Japanese democratization post World War II. Then, it will consider the limited amount of broadband access in Taiwan. This natural experiment will conclude with a synthesis of these negative cases and an

explanation of their importance to seeking causation in the South Korean example.

## 5.1 Japan

### 5.1.1 The Japanese Flavour of the Developmental State

The existence of a developmental state in Japan is well documented in the literature (Johnson 1982; Öniş 1991; Johnson 1995; Leftwich 1995; Woo-Cumings 1999). However, the role of the state in the Japanese economy is not uncontested. The Japanese economic “miracle” is a term first coined by the *Economist* in its September 1, 1962 issue (“Consider Japan” 1962). Since then scholars of all stripes have been attempting explanations of Japan’s rapid growth. Johnson highlights four competing theories of development, each of which has been subsumed by his analysis: Japan essentially created its own form of Keynesian economics, the “anything-but-politics” school that looked to everything from the market to “unique-structural-features” as explanations, the institutionalists that looked to unique Japanese institutions like lifetime employment, and finally that Japan had a “free-ride” because of its post-World War II alliance with the U.S. (1982, 6-16).

The particular character of the developmental state in Japan was slightly different from South Korea’s. Primarily, it was not led by a military dictatorship, which created different institutional arrangements. Johnson argues that the developmental state in Japan has a long history, beginning with the Meiji Restoration in 1868. Calling the state’s actions “plan-rational” – as opposed to communist command economies that were “plan-ideological” – he notes, “Its main criterion was the rational one of effectiveness in meeting the goals of development. Thus, Meiji Japan began to shift away from state entrepreneurship

to collaboration with privately owned enterprises” (Johnson 1982, 23). In addition, the tradition of the state’s strong economically oriented goals can be traced back to the Meiji policy of *fukoku-kyōhei* (rich country, strong military). In the 1930s, the goal was depression recovery; the 1940s were about war preparation. By 1955 the goal was *Ōbei ni oikose* (overtake Europe and America) (Johnson 1982, 20). The combination of the state’s goals and mode of interaction with business would develop into a standard used throughout post-World War II era. In the democratic Japan, “the typical institution is the state-sponsored cartel, in which the state authorizes cartels in industries it designates as strategic but then leaves to the enterprises themselves the task of fashioning and operating the cartel” (Johnson 1982, 310). But how, then, did the state actually coerce businesses in “strategic” industries, and were the policies pursued typically developmental as was the case in Korea?

In Japan, the economic bureaucracy either created ideas for economic growth or saw them at work in one firm and transferred them to all the other companies in an industry to increase effectiveness through what Gary Allinson called “responsive dependence” (qtd. in Johnson 1982, 24). Rarely would the state issue “direct orders to businesses, but those businesses that listened to the signals coming from the government and then responded were favored[sic.]” (Johnson 1982, 24). The signals from the state came in the form of two policy types, both of which echo those described above in the South Korean case. First, the state was protective of its industries, utilizing many mechanisms including tariffs, preferred rates on commodities produced locally, import restrictions, and control over foreign currency. Second, the state was developmental (what the Japanese call “nurturing”), offering low-interest cash to strategic industries,

subsidies, amortization benefits, elimination of import duties for “critical equipment,” licensing foreign technology, paying for industrial parks and employee transportation with public funds, and the aforementioned “administrative guidance” to transfer concepts within an industry (Johnson 1982, 29). Many of the monetary benefits were controlled by the state’s influence over the banking system. Unlike South Korea, where the banks were unabashedly nationalized, the Japanese state’s control was more subtle. Businesses obtain loans from local banks which are overextended and thus “utterly dependent” on guarantees made by the Bank of Japan, “which is itself ... essentially an operating arm of the Ministry of Finance” (Johnson 1982, 10). Analysis of the heavy and chemicals industries shows just how effective the state was in directing the economy using the above tools. Even for the scholars “deeply hostile” to the economic planning bureaucracy, “virtually all ... believe that the government was the inspiration and cause of the movement to heavy and chemical industries that took place during the 1950’s” (Johnson 1982, 31). Like in South Korea, the state wielded power over industry and directed the industrialization and economic development of the nation.

### **5.1.2 A Brief History of Press Repression in Japan**

Repression of the press in Japan began much later than in Korea due in part to the significantly later arrival of journalism in the country. While *Kawaraban*, or newsheets like the *Flugblatt* in Europe, were present in Japan from 1615, the first news organizations that even “resembled” a newspaper did not appear until just before the Meiji restoration, which started in 1868 (Saito 2000, 562-63). Despite the limited “news” present before the Meiji, *Kawaraban* were most certainly controlled by the state. Huffman’s study of the Japanese

press, which credits the media instead of other Meiji-era institutions for the development of a western-style “public” in Japan, concluded that “the Tokugawa era’s salient feature ... was not freedom but control. Even the bravest and most independent pre-1868 writers operated in an environment suffused with regulations, threats and prohibitions design to maintain the existing regime and prevent subversive ideas” (Huffman 1997, 13). Nonetheless, the first Japanese-language paper, the *Batavia Shimbun*, was published in 1861 and was a faithful translation of the official Dutch paper, *Javasche Courant* (Komatsubara 1982, 99).<sup>19</sup>

Although the period just before and during the Meiji Restoration saw a dramatic rise in the number of newspapers, repression of those papers grew as well. The first press laws put in place under the Meiji government “reflected on the enlightened nature of Japan’s first modern government” and included provisions dealing with the type of news that should be reported, like natural disasters, business matters, and foreign affairs. However, the “enlightened” treatment of newspapers ended in 1873 after the editor of the *Hyoron Shimbun*, a political paper, called for the death of some government ministers “for their ineptitude in running the country” (Komatsubara 1982, 100). The state reacted with a revision of the Newspaper Printing and Publishing Ordinance in 1873 and the new Defamation Act of 1875, which for the first time introduced punishments for “those who aimed at the overthrow of government, or attempted to instigate disorder, or slander imperial families, public officials and

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<sup>19</sup> Prior to the opening of Japan, the Dutch were the only foreign nationals allowed to interact with the Japanese. See “A Historical Coincidence” for more. (De Lange, 1998)

the public” (Komatsubara 1982, 101). Under the new laws, more than 200 journalists were imprisoned before 1880.

Despite the beginnings of repression under the Meiji, the heaviest repression of Japanese journalism would come as Japan came under the influence of militaristic leadership. From 1925 to 1945, the Law for the Maintenance of Public Peace ruled the press in Japan. A prominent observer of the Japanese media concluded that this edict “proved savagely effective in suppressing the normal functions of the press” (Komatsubara 1982, 104). Two other legal mechanisms would severely inhibit press freedom in pre-World War II Japan: the consolidation of news agencies and the restriction of newsprint. On June 1, 1936, the state officially combined the two largest news agencies into one monolithic one called the Dōmei Tsūshinsha and banned all other news organizations from sending or receiving international telegraphs. The new, censored organization thus became “the national source of politically correct news from which practically every Japanese newspaper was forced to obtain its news” (De Lange 1998, 151). Beyond centralization for ease of censorship, the state also created a new Cabinet Information Bureau to disseminate the official news. Key posts in the Bureau were held by military personnel, and it was known to critics as the “General Staff Office of Thought and Speech” (De Lange 1998, 152-53). Perhaps even more effective in controlling the press, however, were the legal restrictions the state implemented on access to newsprint. In May of 1940, the state created the Newspaper and Magazine Paper Regulation Committee under economic auspices, but staffed it with members of the Cabinet Information Bureau. The message was clear: uncooperative papers would be stopped from circulating their news. Indeed, papers that had 16 pages before

the war began ended as “meager[sic.] double paged pamphlet[s]” (De Lange 1998, 154; Komatsubara 1982, 115).

As the military rose in prominence, however, other forms of intimidation dwarfed the legal mechanisms of press control. When the editor of *Fukouka Nichi-nichi* wrote an editorial that was critical of the attempted coup d’etat on May 15, 1932, the military responded by “[demonstrating] air raid maneuvers[sic.], using the newspaper’s building as the target” (Komatsubara 1982, 105). The editor, Sunao (Rokko) Kikutake, responded with a warning that the army should not be engaged in politics. Army officers stationed in the area sent threatening letters to the *Fukouka Nichi-nichi* offices and told one of the paper’s reporters that Kikutake “might be shot to death” (Komatsubara 1982, 105). Kikutake would later observe: “reading editorials of various newspapers in Tokyo and Osaka and writing on the [coup], one does not fail to see in many of them an attitude as if they were fearful of and intimidated by someone, thus unable to express freely what they believed” (Komatsubara 1982, 106). Other incidents of physical intimidation were numerous in the run up to World War II. In 1936, the army attacked a Tokyo newspaper, making it miss its evening edition. Troops simultaneously forced their way into another paper and coerced it to print stories that were “favourable[sic.] to the army,” (Komatsubara 1982, 106).

Repression did not end immediately following the war despite MacArthur’s memoranda series which officially abolished “all restrictive legislations regarding the press film and communications; declared freedom of speech and press to be established; and called for the disassociation of the press from government” (Komatsubara 1982, 111). Censorship duties were given to



the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers' (SCAP) Civil Censorship Department, where the primary goal was to purge militaristic journalists and ensure that no stories about hostility between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, or those that were critical of American servicemen in Japan were published. SCAP's censorship program did, however, end. On July 15, 1948 all prior censorship was stopped, and within three months all other restrictions were ended as well (Komatsubara 1982, 114).

### **5.1.3 The Timing of Democratization**

The critical difference between Japan and South Korea was the earlier democratization of Japan immediately following World War II. As such, the three factors that propelled citizen journalism in South Korea would never collide in Japan. Almost instantly after the U.S. occupation of the islands, political parties appeared. Both left-wing parties, like the Japan Socialist Party and Japan Communist Party, alongside conservative parties were re-established and the first elections were held in 1946. These elections also saw the extension of the franchise to women for the first time. In elections in 1947, a disagreement between conservative parties gave the liberals an advantage, resulting in a plurality win for the Japan Socialist Party. Just a few months later, the cabinet dissolved, and in new elections the Liberal party came to power. It would remain from late 1948-1954 (Dolan and Worden 1992). Thus, before the U.S. occupation even ended, the Japanese had seen three peaceful handovers of government along with the development of competitive political parties; two factors considered by many to be clear indicators of a stable, democratic regime.

As such, by the time the Internet was proliferating in Japan (with nearly as high-speeds as in Korea, and currently, even faster), no democratization

movements were active in the country (See "Broadband World : Mapping the Global Picture" 2009, for more on Japanese broadband speeds). In fact, during the period of the Internet's development, the politics of Japan were remarkably stable. A single party, the Liberal Democrats (*Jiyu-Minshuto*; LDP) held power in Japan from 1955 to 1993. Remarkably broad-based, the LDP drew from former bureaucrats, businessmen, journalists, professionals, farmers, and university graduates to create its ranks. In this environment, a political movement was not motivated to change politics and voice its own opinion in a new publication, as was the case with OhmyNews in South Korea. OhmyNews' attempt to start a new citizen journalism-based publication in Japan supports this view. When the team crossed the Korea Strait and started OhmyNews Japan, they closed the organization just two years after they began. This was despite significant support that OhmyNews did not have at its founding. OhmyNews Japan began with a 1.3 billion Yen (£8.2 million) investment from the Japanese media company Softbank and attracted many prominent journalists to its ranks to work as editors (Tokita 2008). But critically missing, as suggested by the South Korean case, there was no political impetus to keep it moving forward.

## 5.2 Taiwan

### 5.2.1 The Similar Taiwanese and Korean Developmental States

The similarities between the developmental state in Taiwan and South Korea are even more striking than the above comparison with Japan. Indeed, much of the literature on the Taiwanese developmental state also includes sections on South Korea (Öniş 1991; Leftwich 1995; Levi-Faur 1998; Woo-Cumings 1999; Wade 2004). Like in the literature on Japan, scholars of Taiwan's development have tested many alternative theories of its success, ranging from a

pure neo-classical account to what Robert Wade argues is the correct, developmental way to view Taiwan: as a Governed Market. Essentially, the model advocates the view “that international competitive advantage could be deliberately created by government not just to nurture a few infant industries to supply the domestic market but to push broad sets of industries towards areas of growth and technological change in the world economy” (Wade 2004, 25). The Governed Market theory proposes that this takes place through three key policies (which will seem familiar from the South Korean case): 1) productive investment which increases technology transfers into production, 2) government-induced heavy investment in key industries, 3) and international competition in both domestic and foreign markets (Wade 2004, 26). Using this model, Wade argues that “The state in Taiwan has been doing much more than the neoclassical accounts recognize to increase supply responsiveness and to steer the direction of industrial growth” (Wade 2004, 73). How, specifically, then did the state induce development?

From the beginning, as in South Korea, the Taiwanese state did so with military power. When the Nationalist army in China was overwhelmed in 1949, it retreated to Taiwan. In so doing, it brought between one and two million soldiers to an island with a population of just six million that had “no political movement or armed force to challenge their rule.” In addition to the “unusually wide room for maneuver[sic.]” this political situation gave the nationalist army, it also “inherited” a very strong economic position. The army took control of “all the productive assets and control mechanisms that the Japanese [during their colonization of the island] had built up over fifty years” including industrial enterprises and mass tracts of land (Wade 2004, 75).

Just as in South Korea, state support of exports in Taiwan began without them being central to the overall growth plan. Instead, the promotion efforts of the early 1950s were designed to counteract “a domestic market glut.” This first export-promotion policy singled out twenty goods and enticed manufacturers to send them abroad by giving the exporter a portion of the foreign exchange. As the decade progressed the state placed increasing importance on exports. It began using export performance as a key criterion to judge import applications. On numerous occasions throughout the 1950s, the state devalued the currency exchange rates in order to increase the domestic currency return for each foreign unit obtained through exportation. By 1957 it introduced a concessional export credit scheme and kept real interest rates high to incentivize export sales when production was more labour-intensive (Wade 2004, 78).

Also like South Korea and other developmental states, Taiwan engaged in economic planning from an early stage. The first plan (1953-1956), called The Plan for Economic Rehabilitation, is still classified but is known to have focused on agriculture, fertilizers and textiles. The second plan was less oblique and significantly more sophisticated (Wade 2004, 81). The Second Four-Year Plan (1955-1961) operated on the assumption that “capital shortage is the major difficulty in economic development ... [and hence] the Government should positively undertake to guide and help private investments so that they do not flow into enterprises which have a surplus productivity and a stagnant market” (qtd. in Wade 2004, 82). In this period, half of the capital formation was done by “government or public enterprises” (Wade 2004, 82). Planning would continue throughout Taiwan’s economic growth. By the fourth plan (1965-1968) the state was directly planning further industries: “Industrial development in the long run

must be centered[sic.] on export products that have high income elasticity and low transportation cost. And around these products there should be development of both forward and backward industries, so both specialization and complementarity may be achieved in the interest of Taiwan's economy" (qtd. in Wade 2004, 87).

### 5.2.2 Press Repression in Taiwan

As in Japan, the history of journalism in Taiwan is relatively brief. The press in Taiwan began as an organ of the state, and as such required no suppression or regulation whatsoever since they spoke for the government. The first paper was started on the anniversary of the Japanese occupation, on June 17, 1896. The *Taiwan Shimpo* (Taiwan News), based in Taipei, was printed in Japanese (a language foreign to the islanders), focused on hard news, and was a direct "organ of the Taiwan governor general" (Chu 1982, 54). Just nine months later a more populist (but still printed in Japanese) paper emerged. The *Taiwan Nippo* (Taiwan Daily) put much more attention towards human-interest stories and literary essays. The *Shimpo* and *Nippo* were immediately locked in circulation battles so intense that employees often resorted to physical intimidation of one another. As a result, the Japanese governor general merged the two papers to form the *Taiwan Nichi-Nichi Shimpo* (Taiwan Daily News) on May 6, 1899. Critically, to expand readership, the *Nichi-Nichi* printed articles in both Japanese and Chinese (Chu 1982, 54-55).

Just two months after the introduction of the first private paper, however, repression came into full force in Taiwan. The *Kosankoku Daily* (High Mountain Daily), founded by a well-known member of the Japanese Diet, was first published in October of 1899. In its first two issues, the publisher called for

“material concerning the corrupt and ruthless policies of the Japanese ruling class ... repeatedly published satirical articles featuring the corruption and incompetence of the government ... [and] accus[ed] the government of a massacre of 7,000 island defenders” (Chu 1982, 56). Before the turn of the century, the state shuttered the *Kosankoku* and added new legal mechanisms to control the island’s press. The Taiwan Newspaper Publication Code and Taiwan Publication Regulations made it illegal to print and circulate newspapers, books, pamphlets or other publications without the direct consent of the state (Chu 1982, 56). These regulations remained in force until the end of the war in the Pacific, but were relaxed in the period between the departure of the Japanese and the arrival of the Nationalists in 1949.

With the arrival of the Nationalists, press freedom was again severely restricted, albeit in an opaque way. Primarily, the Nationalists brought trained journalists and new, productive printing presses with them when they fled the mainland. This meant that the official press, the Central Daily News, could easily dominate the market (Chu 1982, 59). However, in addition, the nationalists added legal and extralegal mechanisms to control the island’s press. The legal mechanisms involved, chiefly, a registration system that required the publisher to obtain a license before printing the first issue of a paper. Penalties for failing to obtain a license or for printing articles that were “indecent ... which are offensive to public morals or which incite others to commit offenses against public morals” included warnings, fines, seizures of issues, the suspension of publication rights, and the outright revocation of registration (Chu 1982, 66). But perhaps more restrictive on a daily basis were the extralegal understandings and taboos that kept Taiwanese journalists in line with the government.

Journalists were simply not to discuss items that attacked the policy of regaining control of mainland China, advocacy of an independent Taiwan, anything with demoralizing effects, or anything that might assist the communists (Chu 1982, 68). This created a particularly difficult, and chilled, situation for individual journalists. One veteran reporter explained:

“If a newspaper is permitted to publish a story only after it is censored, the publisher, the editor and the reporter concerned can at least be free from worrying what might happen to them with the story appears in print. Unprotected by any form of official censorship, newsmen on Taiwan have to be extremely careful about what they print.” (Chu 1982, 68)

Thus in this environment, the Taiwanese were very effective in censoring themselves. For example, when Taiwanese pilots flying U-2s on reconnaissance missions over mainland China were shot down, the world press reported what had happened. The Taiwanese press, “for fear of causing international complications,” said the planes and pilots had been lost due to “mechanical defects” during “routine training flight[s]” (qtd. in Chu 1982, 69).

### **5.2.3 Taiwan Lacks Internet Connectivity**

As described above, the nature of the developmental state and press repression in Taiwan was remarkably similar to South Korea. Also incredibly similar was the process of democratization, which took place just a year later in Taiwan than in South Korea, commencing in 1988. However, one crucial factor was missing in Taiwan for the development of citizen journalism: widespread Internet access. Taiwan lagged behind South Korea in penetration rates by nearly a decade and is still far at the back of its neighbours. According to the International Telecommunications Union, the penetration rate in Taiwan reached Korea’s 2002 levels in 2008. The table below illustrates Taiwan’s lag

behind South Korea in broadband penetration using the standard measure of subscribers per 100 people ("Top 30 Economies in Terms of Broadband Subscribers Per 100 Population, 2007").

	<b>Taiwan</b>	<b>Korea</b>
<b>2003</b>	13.4	23.3
<b>2004</b>	16.5	24.8
<b>2005</b>	20.1 (provisional)	25.2
<b>2007</b>	19.76	29.27
<b>2008</b>	20.9	30.6

While using broadband penetration rates act as a good positive measure of Taiwan's connectivity, the number of users on dial-up connections is also an illustrative negative one. Indeed, the number of dial-up users in Taiwan was at its peak (5.42 million) in June of 2001, just as OhmyNews was becoming popular in South Korea ("Taiwan Internet and Telecommunications Market Reports" 2009). In addition, even more recent reports suggest that a group of Taiwanese still do not wish to connect to the Internet via broadband. The Taiwan Network Information Centre surveyed dial-up users in 2006 and found that only 17.69 percent of these households had any interest in upgrading their connection (Times 2006). Yet another way to illustrate the lag in broad-based uptake of Internet access is to measure the number of Internet Protocol (IP) addresses allocated to individuals and companies in the country. Interestingly, the acceleration of allocation growth happens in Taiwan much after OhmyNews was already gaining ground in South Korea. From 1997 to 2000 address allocation only grew by about 29 percent. This is in stark contrast to the growth from 2001 onwards, when single years saw 34 percent growth or higher ("Ipv4 Address Statistical Table" 2004).



In this environment, none of the online community building critical to the development of citizen journalism could take place. Communities like OhmyNews, CAGE, and the Red Devils were only possible in South Korea because nearly everyone had direct access to high-speed, always-on broadband connections. Thus, in Taiwan, by lagging behind South Korea, democratizers could not depend on accessing people via the Internet. Part of the success of OhmyNews was that supporters of Roh Moo Hyun saw that people were using the Internet to collaborate and participate in community activities (the Red Devils rallies are, perhaps, the best example) and as such trusted that the Web was a way to reach likeminded citizens. Instead, in Taiwan where fewer people had access to the Web and there were no prior examples of large-scale community building online, democratizers had to rely on other means of communication and reporting; they never saw the need to develop a citizen journalism organization like OhmyNews. Also, unlike in Japan, the relative lack of Internet access kept entrepreneurs from even attempting a citizen journalism organization until late in the 2000s. OhmyNews saw Japan as an excellent place to build a new business, in part, because of the high levels of connectivity. Moreover, even when, nearly a decade late, citizen journalism organizations were started, they were met with limited success (as defined above) (See, for example, the minimal impacts shown in Sterne 2008; Zheng 2008).

### **5.3 Japan and Taiwan as Negative Examples**

The Japanese and Taiwanese cases are critical because they each contain the developmental state and press repression that was key in South Korea, but lack one of the other two conditions. By the time high-speed broadband was available in Japan, democracy had been well seated for decades; a pre-existing

political movement did not pick up the proliferation of the Internet as the political landscape was well settled. Just as important, the penetration of broadband Internet in Taiwan lagged significantly behind South Korea; democratizers in the late 1980s were not brought up on the Internet like the 386ers were in South Korea. By showing the earlier democratization in Japan and relatively low penetration of broadband Internet in Taiwan, this paper argues for the necessity of all three conditions: the strong state and press repression; Internet infrastructure; and a nascent democratization movement to capitalize on the collision of the previous two forces for the development of citizen journalism.

	<b>Developmental State and Repression</b>	<b>High levels of Internet Connectivity</b>	<b>Democratization Movement During the Rise of the Internet</b>
<b>South Korea</b>	X	X	X
<b>Japan</b>	X	X	
<b>Taiwan</b>	X		X

## 6 Conclusion

### 6.1 The Conditions Conducive to Citizen Journalism in South Korea

This paper argues that the conditions that spawned citizen journalism in South Korea were two critical macrosocial factors, combined with an already active political cohort. First, the country had a culture of journalistic innovation created by a history of cyclical press repression and freedom. While freedom of the press was limited in various forms from the beginning of journalism in South Korea, the developmental state led by the military was particularly good at taming journalists. The period of “maximum repression” under the Fifth republic motivated “maximum innovation” when the country democratized. Many entrepreneurs built new types of journalism that were the antithesis of the

old *Kwanje Ullon*. OhmyNews, and the *Hankoreh Shinmun* before it, result from this tradition. Second, South Korea invested heavily in infrastructure, particularly communications networks. This investment in infrastructure, which was first embedded in the South Korean mindset as a primary role of the state with the Seoul-Pusan highway, allowed for new types of communities to flourish. With such a high proportion of the population using always-on, extremely high-speed broadband, groups like CAGE and the Red Devils showed democratizers that the Internet was a good way to build community in South Korea. OhmyNews was just this sort of community, built around journalists and politically minded citizens instead of football fans. Third, the democratizing generation was overwhelmingly dissatisfied with the media environment and fully fluent in the use of digital communications technologies. This generation was subject to a repressive regime that, until 1987, was constantly ratcheting up its level of control. Journalists, in particular, bore the brunt of this, as illustrated by the some of the press guidelines that dictated the point-size of headlines. Moreover, because the state had been building infrastructure *and* educating the population on how to use it, these democratizers were, essentially, born digital. The 386-generation had been using digital technologies like BBS to connect to like-minded individuals since they entered university.

*Thus, the development of citizen journalism in South Korea is a paradox. The legacy of a strong state gave the democratizers both the motivation (past repression) and the means (internet infrastructure) to develop a media system that better accorded with their principles (democracy). Moreover, as Japan and Taiwan illustrate, removing just one of these conditions is enough to inhibit the*

germinated (Japan) or organic (Taiwan) growth of citizen journalism organizations.

## 6.2 Implications for the Polyculture

This study has clear, and quite sceptical, implications for the use of citizen journalism as *the* future model for *all* news production in the media polyculture that is developing in the United States. To suggest that citizen journalism should be applied, as it is found in South Korea, to the United States or United Kingdom is pure folly. Just as it was shown that the development strategies employed by the Asian Tigers were particular to their own circumstances – and that imposing outside, neoliberal models would have been inappropriate – it would also be unsuitable to directly apply the South Korean citizen journalism model to other countries, particularly those in the West.

Take the United States as an example. As shown empirically by the Washington Post's aforementioned Loudoun Extra experiment, citizen journalism has failed (by the standard of wide readership, political influence, and economic sustainability). This could have been anticipated by the theory developed in this paper. The United States did not experience the developmental state and press repression in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as did the Asian Tigers. Nor did the United States build or promote the use of the Internet infrastructure at the levels of South Korea, Japan or Taiwan. In 2009, vast swaths of the country still rely on dial-up Internet connections. Finally, the biggest struggles of democratization were resolved more than a century ago in the United States' Civil War.

This paper, and the theory developed within, does not intend to suggest, however, that this form of news production is entirely inappropriate for use as a

*part* of the polyculture. Indeed, applying this analysis to subsectors – either geographic or topical – that share the conditions found in South Korea, it might be a successful way to produce news. The technology news vertical in the U.S. is instructive. *Slashdot.org*, one of the first sites to provide news for the growing community of Linux<sup>20</sup> users, grew rapidly from its inception, indicating just how much pent-up demand for such information existed. Interestingly, like citizen journalism sites, the site’s editors created none of its content; they linked to prominent stories elsewhere on the Web and invited their readers to add to the story with comments on *Slashdot.org*. The success of *Slashdot.org* (it is visited by between 800,000 and 1 million unique visitors per month, has directly contributed to the development of new Linux software, and supports itself through advertising) is in concert with the findings of this study. In this topic area, news was not previously suppressed *per se*, but simply was not available in a single location. Like in a suppressed environment, news consumers could not get stories they were interested in and journalists who wanted to write those stories had no major outlet for them. Moreover, Linux users were often either institutional (at a university or large company) and as such had access to broadband at a much higher rate than the general public. Finally, thanks to the political nature of the Open Source Software (OSS) movement, this group of readers had the motivation to participate in creating news that suited their particular view of the technology world. Consequently, *Slashdot.org* has become a thriving pseudo-citizen journalism organization (Malda 2007).

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<sup>20</sup> An alternative, open source operating system comparable to Microsoft Windows and Apple Mac OS X

### 6.3 The Future

The argument in this paper should leave the reader with questions about the permanence of citizen journalism in South Korea. The conditions required for the development of citizen journalism were unique in South Korea and emerged from a particular historical context. What will happen when that context changes? That is to say, what happens when the 386ers retire and begin to die? Without the political interest of the democratizing generation, will there still be people willing to give their time to read and write for OhmyNews? If so, why? Has the site been institutionalized into the South Korean media landscape? Do South Koreans now expect that citizens must do some of the work of creating the journalism they consume? Each of these questions deserves a future project of their own. Hopefully, however, this study offers a framework that further researchers can use to seek out the core of what each of the above questions asks: what will be the conditions that promote change in South Korean media system? The above analysis suggests that the intersection of political climate, infrastructure, and social groups offer a good place to start.

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