
SOUTH KOREA IN 2002

Multiple Political Dramas

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Abstract

This article analyzes how political actors maneuvered and counter-maneuvered in South Korea in 2002, developing political strategy and exploiting national issues in order to position themselves for the presidential election of December 19, which dominated Korean politics throughout the year. Since public opinion polling conducted regularly by major news media had to a great extent shaped important decisions of all aspirants for *daekwon* (big power), the analysis focuses on explaining how the popularity of Lee Hoi-chang, Roh Moo-hyun, and Chung Mong-jun fluctuated, and how Roh finally won the presidential election.

The presidential election scheduled for December 19, 2002, dominated Korean politics all through the year, with all political actors trying to manipulate most other important issues, such as legislation and inter-Korean relations, for the sake of competition for “big power” (*daekwon*). The major cleavage has been between the ruling minority party, the Millennium Democratic Party (MDP), and the opposition majority party, the Grand National Party (GNP), even though each party consists of many different factions, each of which maneuvers to maximize its interests. The two parties accused each other of corruption and illegal activities, while exposing each other’s dirty linen. As the result, the main issue of the presidential election, the unification policy, and even the investigation of corruption cases by prosecutors, were politicized, leaving nothing in Korea untouched by political considerations.

After five years of Kim Dae-jung’s presidency, Korean political circles and society have been torn into many different directions by such factors as ideology, regionalism, personal ties, and like or dislike of the Kim administration.

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At the same time, the Korean public has become thoroughly disenchanted with politicians, who engage in endless partisan politics, willing even to distort simple logic and common sense to justify their positions while denouncing each other. Nonetheless, the Korean public acted in concert to support and cheer the Korean soccer team, which advanced to the semifinals in the World Cup, jointly hosted by Korea and Japan. Unprecedented in Korean history, millions of Koreans gathered peacefully in Korean soccer team uniforms in many urban centers, watching and cheering the games, elevating Guus Hiddink, the Dutch-born manager of the Korean team, to be an instant national hero.

Korean news media played an unusually important role in not only reflecting public opinion but also in shaping and leading public opinion and the decisions of major political actors through sensational reports of maneuvers, as well as the corruption of political actors. One of the news media's powerful tools is the public opinion poll, which all major newspapers and television stations have conducted regularly in cooperation with professional polling organizations. Introduced to Korean politics in the late 1980s in the course of political democratization, "the power of the opinion poll" in Korean politics has been exceptional. The news media's prominent reporting of who is leading whom in different hypothetical settings does not simply reflect public opinion but also actually leads it, decisively influencing the judgements and decisions of key political actors. Ironically, the public opinion poll has almost displaced the final voting outcome.

The main cleavage in Korean politics has been pro- and anti-Kim Dae-jung. The ruling party wants to "recreate political power" at any cost, which means that anybody is acceptable except Lee Hoi-chang, the leader of the opposition party, who lost the presidency to Kim Dae-jung by a *slight* margin, less than 400,000 votes, in the previous election. In contrast, the opposition party is determined to reject anyone acceptable to the Kim administration. Thus, all other policy issues, such as how to deal with North Korea, how to change the political rules of the game, regional cleavages, and conservative and progressive ideological divergence are subordinated to this paramount concern of the presidential election.

Selecting Presidential Candidates

When President Kim Dae-jung stepped down as the chairman of the MDP in order to ensure his neutrality in the presidential election, the first question that the ruling party without the president's leadership had to face was how to select its presidential nominee. Various factions within the MDP have maneuvered and counter-maneuvered. The previous method of selecting the nominee by the party delegation would have allowed Rhee In-je to grab the nomination. But Rhee's political record made it questionable whether he

could beat Lee Hoi-chang, which was the most important consideration for selecting the ruling party's nominee. After having been defeated by Lee Hoi-chang in the primary of the GNP, Rhee nonetheless ran for the presidency as an independent, thereby facilitating Kim Dae-jung's election to the presidency. Rhee then joined Kim's MDP. Thus, the MDP changed the rule to that of an American-style primary, allowing ordinary citizens to participate in the selection of the ruling party's nominee.¹

Initially, several leaders of the ruling party ran for primaries that, as the first such attempt in Korean history, riveted the attention of the news media with great fanfare. As the primary progressed, those candidates with mere regional ties withdrew one by one, finally leaving only two candidates, Rhee In-je and Roh Moo-hyun, a 56-year-old human rights lawyer who never attended college but has been active in the democratic and labor movements. Although Roh's personal integrity is highly respected, he still failed to get elected to the National Assembly from his home town of Busan.² As it became obvious that the Jeolla Provinces were solidly behind Roh, who did not belong to Kim's inner circle, Rhee In-je withdrew from the competition, suspecting that the president's preference lay with Roh.³

Known as a principled politician who is not easily swayed by political expediency and takes radical or progressive views on all policy issues, Roh was genuinely popular among the younger generation of the Koreans known as the 386 generation, the age group now in their thirties, born in the 1960s and entering college in the 1980s, and who enthusiastically participated in the democratic movement of the late 1980s. As a result of the MDP primary, public interest in the presidential election increased substantially, while all the news media competed to report Roh's popularity.

Highly educated, but disenchanted with the old style of politics, followers of Roh used the Internet to form a fan club—known as *Roh sa mo* (Gathering of those people loving Roh)—to articulate their political views and to drum up the public support for Roh. As the major news media has given prominence to new hi-tech forms of political support groups, Roh's rise has generated genuine excitement and new expectations among Koreans, who had been disillusioned and generally apathetic about the election. His followers connected with each other through the Internet, debating policy issues, developing political platforms, raising funds, organizing local branches, and attending public gatherings where Roh appeared.⁴ With the spread of "Roh wind,"

1. About 70,000 delegates participated in the primaries, half of them from the party membership and half randomly selected from the population. Voting took place in several major cities. See *Kyunghyang Shinmoon*, January 9 and 15, 2002.

2. *Ibid.*, March; 13, 20, 26, 2002.

3. *Ibid.*, April 6, 2002.

4. *Joongang Ilbo* (Central Daily News), April 10, 2002.

his popularity in public opinion polls rose from less than 30% to about 55% by April, leading Lee by a margin of 17%. The Kim administration had finally chosen a candidate popular enough to beat his enemy, Lee Hoi-chang.

In contrast to the rising popularity of Roh, Lee Hoi-chang's popularity suffered a major setback in April when the ruling party revealed that Lee lived in a luxury apartment belonging to his relatives without paying rent, thus aggravating his image as one of the privileged elite in Korean society. To make matters worse, it was reported that Lee had occupied four luxury apartments within the apartment building, in sharp contrast to the poor housing conditions of ordinary Seoul citizens. Another issue that tarnished his reputation was the fact that his daughter-in-law went to Hawaii to give birth, presumably in order to make her new daughter an American citizen. This was viewed as a special privilege of the Korean establishment, thereby weakening Lee's image of political integrity. Moreover, the story that his two sons had dodged military service by failing the physical examinations, which had undermined Lee's previous bid for the presidency, reappeared in the news media. Within his own party, there was also rising criticism that Lee monopolized all decision-making authority, acting as if he had already become the president of the Republic of Korea. These stories damaged Lee's popularity, allowing Roh's to surpass Lee's.⁵

Political Corruption and Candidates' Changing Fortunes

However, the "Roh wind" did not last long. By early summer, Roh's popularity as measured in public opinion polls showed a drastic plunge, and remained thereafter at around 20%, whereas Lee's popularity slowly rose to hover at around 35% in all public opinion polls. Two primary factors contributed to the changing political fortunes. Apparently carried away by his popularity, Roh made a political blunder. Since his political debut came under the patronage of former President Kim Young-sam, but now as the official MDP successor to the current President Kim, Roh calculated that by obtaining the support of both persons jointly in his bid for power, he could win the election. His first public act was to pay a courtesy call on the former president, who had become quite unpopular even in his home region of southern Gyeongsang Province and the Busan area because of his perceived responsibility for creating the financial crisis in 1997, leading to the International Monetary Fund's intervention. In his meeting with Kim Young-sam, Roh conspicuously showed that he was still wearing the watch that Kim had given him, while asking Kim for a recommendation for the MDP candidate in the Busan mayoral race. This naïve gesture tarnished his image as an

5. *Kyonghyang Shinmoon*, March 14, 2002.

incorruptible new politician and alienated many people even from his home region, who viewed him as playing the old politics instead of maintaining his own independence. In addition, some of his reckless remarks expressing anti-Americanism and radical and unconventional views alarmed large segments of the Korean population. When asked by a reporter whether he wanted to visit the United States, Roh replied, "I have never been to the United States. I will not go to the United States to have my picture taken for Korean domestic political purposes.⁶ On another occasion, he was quoted as saying that even if inter-Korean relations were properly managed, one could mess up on other matters. Roh's careless remarks genuinely alarmed the well-to-do sector of South Korea. In addition, Roh was vulnerable to criticism that he is too leftist, and to the fact that his father-in-law had been jailed for a long time—passing away in prison—under the charge that he collaborated with the communists during the Korean War and refused to renounce communism.

Another reason for Roh's declining popularity was the scandal involving Kim Dae-jung's sons and close confidants. With the Kim administration's policy of financially supporting venture entrepreneurialism, drastic booms of venture and the inevitable busts revealed many cases of irregular activities by those managing financial and venture enterprises. Thorough investigations of some cases of cheating and manipulation of stock prices led to suspicions that some influential politicians close to the Blue House had used inside information, peddled influence, and took bribes. For instance, the investigation of one such case, known as "Lee Yong-ho-gate," involving a young man who allegedly made a fortune through illegal activities in venture business, led to the implication of many influential persons close to President Kim. This provided the opposition party with good ammunition to condemn the Kim administration for corruption. Kwon No-gap, a long-time confidant of the president who was widely believed to be the *de facto* number two man in the ruling inner circle and whose influence touched all major important government decisions, even though he held no formal position, was tried and sentenced to prison for having taken a bribe from a high-ranking officer of the Korean Security Agency.⁷ A key executive of the Kim Dae-jung Peace Foundation, a longtime personal secretary of President Kim, was arrested and sentenced to jail for influence peddling. And a cousin of the first lady who enjoyed rapid promotion to management of an important national bank was found guilty of similar illegal activities.

As the investigation of these people who used their ties to President Kim for influence-peddling proceeded, the neutrality of the prosecutor's office be-

6. Interview with Pyongwha (Peace) Radio, April 26, 2002.

7. *Hankook Ilbo* (Korean Daily News), May 4, 2002.

came the focus of public attention, leading to the suspicion that the office was using political judgements for criminal cases. After a prolonged debate and deadlock, the National Assembly finally agreed to set up a special prosecutor's office to investigate the cases involving the president's sons.⁸

The second son, Kim Hong-yup, the most influential executive of the Kim Dae-jung Peace Foundation, was found guilty of having received money from businessmen as well as from a high-ranking officer of the Korean National Security Agency, and was sentenced to four years in prison.⁹ The president's youngest son, Kim Hong-gul, who was living in an expensive house in southern California after graduating from an American university, was also implicated in the process of investigating a case of influence-peddling by a young man who claimed to be close to President Kim. The young man actually worked for a while for the Kim administration, handling invitations to Korea for foreign luminaries, such as billionaire financier George Soros and pop singer Michael Jackson. The case was exposed when a public charge was brought by the young man's chauffeur. The young man had used the president's youngest son to get special deals in numerous cases, and in return paid him while accumulating massive wealth for himself. Probably worried that he might be made a fall guy by the president's inner circle, the young man had meticulously accumulated records of his dealings with Kim Hong-gul, and eventually made most of his records public in order to protect himself.¹⁰ In the process of investigation, a high-ranking police officer suspected of masterminding a scheme to protect Kim Hong-gul fled to the United States. Kim Hong-gul was eventually arrested, sentenced to a short term, and released after serving nearly one year in jail in Korea.¹¹ The president's eldest son, Kim Hong-il, a member of the National Assembly, was also featured in the Korean news media for his close ties with Korean gangsters and for influence-peddling, thereby hurting the president's public image.¹² The opposition party charged that Kim and his three sons owned apartments and houses worth \$10 million even though none of them had ever held a paying job.¹³

Since manipulation of stock prices, using inside information, and embezzling company funds meant that many individuals lost money on their investments, public anger grew over this type of corruption, critically damaging the image of the MDP as well as President Kim. The Korean public expressed its anger through voting, leading to disastrous defeats of the ruling party. In the

8. *Ibid.*, April 12, 2002.

9. *Donga Ilbo* (East Asia Daily News), July 11, 2002; *Chosun Ilbo* (Chosun Daily News), November 25, 2002.

10. *Hankook Ilbo*, June 6, 2002.

11. *Donga Ilbo*, June 6, 2002.

12. *Ibid.*, September 9, 2002.

13. *Ibid.*, September 16, 2002.

governors' and mayoral elections, the opposition GNP won 11 out of 16 posts.¹⁴ In the competition for 13 National Assembly seats, it won 11 seats, becoming the majority party. These were the most serious defeats that any South Korean ruling party has ever experienced.¹⁵ Later, the GNP demonstrated its political muscle by leading the National Assembly to reject two of President Kim's candidates for the premiership.

Roh's dilemma is thus how to handle his relations with the Kim administration. He is the official successor to Kim's presidency, but Kim's party has been so unpopular that his ties with Kim have proven to be a liability. Nonetheless, Roh publicly declared that he would inherit both the credits and liabilities of the Kim administration.

In this context, Lee Hoi-chang's popularity as measured in the opinion polls started to catch up with Roh's, raising many concerns in the MDP about whether Roh would be able to beat Lee.¹⁶ To make matters more complicated, Roh, when nominated as the presidential candidate of the ruling party, promised that if his MDP did not win at least one in three elections in his home region, he would ask his party to reconfirm confidence in him as the official candidate. The outcome was a disaster for the MDP.¹⁷ The GNP received four million more votes than the ruling party, whereas the difference between totals for Kim and Lee in the previous election was less than 400,000 votes.

The ruling party initiated a counteroffensive against Lee Hoi-chang's credibility, accusing his two sons of having dodged military obligation through illegal means, although Lee had already paid a high price for that accusation in the previous election. The ruling party furthermore charged that some government officials and persons close to Lee had had a secret meeting to cover up the illegal evasion of military service by his sons. The person who brought this charge to public was a dubious character, who, as a low-ranking military man, had worked in the military conscription office and had himself served prison terms for taking bribes and then masqueraded as an official investigator for the case of Lee's sons. The "investigator" said he had tape recorded former officials testifying that Lee's wife bribed relevant officials with about \$200,000. This charge provided the ammunition for the ruling party to initiate an all-out political attack on Lee, eventually leading to suits and countersuits. It took several months for the prosecutor's office to investigate the case, and eventually the office rendered the judgment that the tape submitted by the accuser may have been edited. The accuser was summoned,

14. *Kookmin Ilbo* (National Daily News), May 27, 2002.

15. *Ibid.*, May 27, 2002.

16. *Hankook Ilbo*, May 14, 2002.

17. *Joongang Ilbo*, June 15, 2002.

but had disappeared.¹⁸ Lee's camp accused the MDP of inciting the convicted accuser to falsify the alleged evidence, while the ruling party accused the GNP of having obstructed the investigation. Despite the charges and countercharges, the accusation appeared to have not severely affected Lee's standing in public opinion polls.

A Match for Lee?

With Lee maintaining a safe lead over Roh, the anti-Roh faction in the MDP searched for an alternative to Roh who could beat Lee. The dark horse believed to be capable of competing with Lee was Chung Mong-jun, the youngest son of the late Chung Ju-young, the founder of Hyundai group, who had run for the presidency in 1992. As vice president of the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), and co-chair of the Korean Organizing Committee for the 2002 FIFA World Cup Korea-Japan, Chung Mong-jun, a 51-year-old with an American doctorate, could reap all the benefits from the euphoric public reaction to the Korean team, which advanced to the semifinals for the first time in Korean history. Disenchanted by politics, the Korean people displayed their enthusiasm and national pride on an unprecedentedly massive scale—but in an amazingly disciplined and orderly fashion. Dressed in red uniforms like those of the Korean team, millions of Koreans—21 million according to one figure—gathered in public places to watch and cheer the games, shouting “Daehan minkuk!” (Republic of Korea!) and “Oh pilseung Korea!” (Victory to Korea!), oblivious of all social conflicts and cleavages. Chung Mong-jun skillfully exploited his popularity to form his own party, People's Unity of the 21st Century, and positioned himself as a presidential candidate with a public image as a relatively young, highly educated, moderate reformist. According to a June 30 public poll, Chung's popularity soared to the level of Roh's. A July poll found it had exceeded Roh's, and by September, Chung's popularity approached the level of Lee's.¹⁹

Worried that Roh would not be able to beat Lee, some influential politicians of the MDP—mostly National Assembly members from regions where Roh was not that popular—demanded that Roh, who had been selected as the MDP presidential candidate through the primaries, be replaced by Chung, who was not even a member of the MDP, purely on the grounds that he was more likely to win. In some opinion polls surveying voter preference in a hypothetical contest among the three candidates, Chung enjoyed a brief, small lead over Lee, but always surpassed Roh. Polls also indicated that if both Roh and Chung ran, the victory would certainly go to Lee. The critical

18. *Shyeyke Ilbo* (World Daily News), October 26, 2002.

19. *Hankyerye* (One Nation), July 7, 2002; *Donga Ilbo*, September 23, 2002.

question, therefore, was whether the two candidates would be able to compromise, leaving only one contender.

The two candidates came from opposite social classes—Chung is the richest National Assemblyman, whereas Roh is from a poor family background and holds only a high school diploma. They also had contrasting policy preferences, one claiming to be a moderate middle-roader, and the other representing a progressive reformist camp. In short, the two were apart in ideological standing and in class origin, but both represented the new younger generation of Korean political leaders. The new generation of Korean voters, deeply disenchanted with the three Kims—Kim Dae-jung, Kim Young-sam, and Kim Jong-pil—were desperate to have new faces in Korean politics.

Roh and Chung, however, shared one common objective: to oppose Lee's bid for the presidency. This led them to negotiate just a few days before the deadline for registering as a presidential candidate. Eventually, both agreed that they would hold one television debate, and the one who scored higher in a public opinion poll would run as the "unified candidate."

The poll result favored Roh by a slight margin over Chung: 46.8% versus 42.2%, thereby changing the presidential election to a contest between two strong candidates, even though altogether seven candidates were competing.²⁰ Probably unprecedented, this method of selecting presidential candidates implies that public opinion polls almost substitute for actual voting in Korea.

Inter-Korean Relations

Inter-Korean relations fluctuated with high expectations and deep disappointments. In early 2002, Foreign Policy Advisor to the president Im Dong-won visited Pyongyang, and in his meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, allegedly advised him to open direct communications with Tokyo and even with the United States, despite George Bush's tough policy toward Pyongyang. The meeting produced a mutual agreement to open railway connections near the west and east coasts of the Korean Peninsula. This agreement was viewed as a part of the implementation of various understandings reached between the two Kims when they met in Pyongyang in 2000. Eager to see Kim Jong-il visit Seoul, President Kim urged his counterpart to fulfill what he had promised on several public occasions.

The atmosphere of conciliation and hopeful expectation was shattered when North Korean patrol boats crossed the sea demarcation line between the two Koreas and then fired at South Korean navy ships, sinking one high-speed patrol boat and killing five navy men. The South Korean public, espe-

20. *Chosun Ilbo*, November 25, 2002.

cially persons critical of Kim Dae-jung's sunshine policy, was outraged. What made the issue politically more explosive was the South Korean government's response to the North Korean aggression. Many news media close to the Kim administration toned down the incident. By describing the naval clash as an accident, the media passed over Kim Jong-il's responsibility, thereby further intensifying criticism of the sunshine policy. Dropping in the polls, the South Korean government eventually sent a warning to Pyongyang, while restraining any retaliatory action and pledging to continue its sunshine policy. However, the United States also responded by canceling its plans to send an official emissary to Pyongyang.²¹ The crisis was eventually resolved when the North officially expressed its regret over the incident.

Thereafter, the two Koreas renewed dialogue, reaching agreements on such issues as the rail connections; developing Kaesung as an industrial complex; and South Korean aid in the form of 400,000 tons of rice and 100,000 tons of fertilizer. In addition, the two sides stepped up exchange of personnel. North Korea sent its soccer team to the World Cup games, and even sent a large contingent of athletes to the Asian Games held in Busan. What attracted South Korean public attention was the North Korean cheerleading teams, composed of 250 North Korean women, whose beauty and disciplined performances earned enthusiastic applause from the South Korean public and thereby raised hopes for reconciliation and eventual unification.

Several issues, however, remained as major impediments for inter-Korean relations. One was the problem of North Korean economic refugees in China, estimated at around 300,000. Initially, Seoul was reluctant to accept them into South Korea. But after the refugees sought asylum in foreign embassies in Beijing, with spectacular scenes prominently reported in the foreign news media, the South Korean government changed its stance and actively negotiated with the foreign embassies to arrange for the refugees to go to Korea.²²

Another potentially disruptive issue emerged after North Korea publicly acknowledged kidnapping a number of Japanese. Many South Koreans demanded that the North take the same action in regard to kidnapped South Koreans, as well as Korean War prisoners. So far, North Korea has insisted that there are no kidnapped South Koreans there except for those who voluntarily came to the North.

The most serious challenge to the sunshine policy, however, was the Bush administration's accusation that North Korea had continued a secret nuclear project in violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework. North Korea's nuclear issue seems to have engendered tensions in South Korean-U.S. relations, with

21. *Hankook Ilbo*, July 2, 2002.

22. *Joongang Ilbo*, May 25, 2002; *Kyunghyang Shinmoon*, May 24, 2002.

the South Korean government insisting on its sunshine policy while stressing the need to resolve the issues through peaceful dialogue and negotiation. Understandably, the anti-Kim Dae-jung camp used the issue to step up its criticism of the sunshine policy, making it a campaign issue. Meanwhile, widespread anti-Americanism, initially stemming from American unilateralism in international affairs and Washington's tough policy toward North Korea, was further aggravated when two Korean middle school girls were crushed to death by an American armored vehicle in a military exercise, with the subsequent acquittal in American military court of the two soldiers responsible. These issues worked in favor of Roh and damaged Lee, whose stand on the North was similar to the American policy.

The New President: Roh Moo-hyun

With Chung Mong-jun's withdrawal, and his public pledge to support Roh Moo-hyun, Roh's popularity surged, outpacing Lee's by 41.8% to 33.2% in most public opinion polls. For the first time since 1972, the presidential election turned into a contest between two strong candidates with different support bases and positions on many important policy issues.

Lee Hoi-chang, 67, a former Supreme Court justice and the leader of the conservative GNP, represented the vested interests of the Korean establishment. Roh Moo-hyun, a human rights lawyer with a colorful career as a labor movement activist, appealed strongly to the alienated, and to economically less-influential groups. Koreans over the age of 50 tended to be firmly behind Lee, whereas Roh was quite popular with twenty- and thirty-somethings who, although highly educated, felt that their opportunities in Korean society have been shrinking. On the ideological spectrum, Lee stands on the right and conservative side, whereas Roh belongs to the left and "progressive" side. Roh is from the Busan area, where the prevalent anti-Kim Dae-jung feeling in the region left him far behind Lee in popular support, but ironically, he enjoyed almost unanimous support from the Jeolla region. The region strongly behind Lee was Northern Gyeongsang Province, and Lee also counted on the larger lead in Southern Gyeongsang Province.

If Lee symbolized stability and continuity even though he unequivocally acknowledged the need for reform, Roh portrayed himself as part of a new generation of Korean politicians advocating drastic reforms. The catchphrase of Roh's campaign was "liquidation of old politics," whereas Lee stressed the need to "judge the corrupt regime." On the issue of North Korea, Roh pledged to uphold the sunshine policy, whereas Lee promised to provide conditional assistance to North Korea while using more forceful means to discourage its nuclear program. Lee tended to side with business interests, whereas Roh was clearly on the side of labor. But during the presidential

campaign, each candidate moved toward the middle to attract support from the other side.

Once the official campaign period begins, any public announcement of public opinion poll results is banned, although conducting such polls is legal. Both the ruling and the opposition parties knew that although Roh was leading by a slight margin, the actual result of the election would be unpredictable because of the large number of undecided voters. Both candidates, therefore, campaigned hard, making many promises. One of Roh's promises that might have influenced the outcome of the election was that he would relocate the capital from Seoul to Daejeon in Chungcheong Province, whereas Lee tried to rally the support of Seoul citizens by criticizing Roh's plan, which would lower property values in Seoul. Nonetheless, the majority of voters in Chungcheong went with Roh, while Lee failed to obtain a majority even in Seoul.

The other issue that worked against Lee was rising anti-American feeling, particularly among the younger generation of Koreans, which culminated in massive candlelight demonstrations throughout Korea just a few days before the election. As the North Korean nuclear issue heated up, the Roh camp skillfully exploited the crisis by asking voters to make a choice between "war and peace," portraying Roh as a candidate who would bring peace to the Korean Peninsula in contrast to Lee, whose hardline policy would lead to war. Roh's side, which was composed primarily of a younger generation of campaign specialists, developed a very effective campaign strategy, skillfully utilizing television and Internet resources, whereas Lee's strategists failed to come out with a new, fresh public relations strategy.

There was one more surprise in the presidential election: Chung Mong-jun, who gave up his candidacy for Roh and campaigned with him, abruptly withdrew his endorsement of Roh a few hours before the official end of the campaign. Surprised, Roh hurried to Chung's residence to talk with him, but Chung humiliated Roh by refusing to see him. While there is no way of knowing how Chung's change of mind affected the outcome of the election, the interpretation that this episode worked for Roh is reasonable, especially as it alarmed Roh's supporters, who flooded the Internet with appeals urging younger voters to vote. The loser of this saga turned out to be Chung Mong-jun, who played a critical role in Roh's successful bid for the presidency, but who is not in position to claim any credit.

As shown in Table 1, Roh Moo-hyun won the election by a small margin of 2.3%. For the first time since Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, an unconventional politician from a poor family background, without much previous political experience and without much support from the South Korean establishment—this despite the fact that he was the nominee of the ruling party—was elected to the presidency. Roh represents a new generation of

TABLE 1 *The Result of the Sixteenth Presidential Election*

<i>Region</i>	<i>No. of Votes Lee Hoi-chang</i>	<i>No. of Votes Roh Moo-hyun</i>	<i>No. of Votes Others</i>	<i>Turnout Rate</i>
Seoul	2,447,376 44.96%	2,792,957 51.30%	190,933 3.51%	71.4%
Busan	1,314,274 66.75%	587,946 29.86%	64,725 3.29%	71.2%
Daegu	1,002,164 77.75%	240,745 18.68%	44,301 3.44%	71.1%
Incheon	547,205 44.57%	611,766 49.83%	65,245 5.31%	67.8%
Gwangju	26,869 3.58%	715,182 95.18%	8,562 1.14%	78.1%
Daejeon	266,760 39.82%	369,046 55.09%	31,883 4.76%	67.6%
Ulsan	267,737 52.88%	178,584 35.27%	59,004 11.65%	70.0%
Gyeonggi	2,120,191 44.19%	2,430,193 50.65%	221,550 4.62%	69.6%
Gangwon	400,405 52.48%	316,722 41.51%	42,404 5.56%	68.4%
N. Chungcheong	311,044 42.89%	365,623 50.42%	45,290 6.25%	68.0%
S. Chungcheong	375,110 41.23%	474,531 52.16%	55,204 6.07%	66.0%
N. Jeolla	65,334 6.19%	966,053 91.59%	20,908 1.98%	74.6%
S. Jeolla	53,074 4.63%	1,070,506 93.39%	19,910 1.74%	76.4%
N. Gyeongsang	1,056,446 73.47%	311,358 21.65%	66,802 4.65%	71.6%
S. Gyeongsang	1,083,564 67.52%	434,642 27.08%	83,706 5.22%	72.4%
Jeju	105,744 39.93%	148,423 56.05%	9,888 3.73%	68.6%
Total	11,443,297 46.59%	12,014,277 48.91%	1,030,315 4.19%	70.8%

SOURCE: National Election Commission, <<http://www.nec.go.kr>>.

Korean political leaders who have been elected on the promise of a new kind of politics and with overwhelming support from the Internet generation. However, it remains to be seen whether the high hopes that South Korea has for this new generation of leaders will be realized. One of the most challenging questions for the president-elect is how to ameliorate the current polariza-

tion of Korean society, including rampant regionalism. The vote in this past election split South Korea into west and east blocs, with over 90% of Jeolla Province voters preferring Roh. Right after the election, North Korea toughened its position on the nuclear issue by removing international surveillance cameras and inspectors from its nuclear facilities. The United States responded by adopting a policy of “tailored containment.” The difference between Seoul and Washington has become more apparent, leading the *New York Times* to carry an article entitled “Seoul Challenges American Policy on the North.”²³ Probably, the most pressing issue confronting Roh will be his ability to manage South Korea’s relations with Washington while resolving the North Korean issue.

23. *New York Times*, January 2, 2003.