CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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Internet use by parties, citizens, and various organized interests has been transforming political participation across much of the world. While much of this research has searched for internet effects on political participation (Boulianne 2009; Bimber 2003; Best and Krueger 2005; Gibson and Cantijoch 2011; Tolbert and McNeal 2003; Gainous and Wagner 2011), more recent work has turned its attention to the manner in which the internet has become imbricated in political processes and contexts (Jensen, Jorba, and Anduiza 2012; Vaccari 2013; Crozier 2012). That is to say, the internet is more usefully conceived of not as an independent variable related to behavior but a communication space in which political life takes place along with the sundry other spaces of political communication. And despite the common technical architectures of these online spaces, the factors that give rise to their use, the political identities performed, and the consequences of this activity are subject to the wider political context in which they operate. For this reason, it is useful to investigate the use and implications of online political tools and communication in locations outside of familiar Western contexts (Anduiza, Jensen, and Jorba 2012; Howard and Hussain 2013). This book considers the operation of computerized voting advice applications (VAAs) and the consequences they have

on voters in East Asia's three consolidated democratic systems: Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

VAAs have become a widespread feature of European elections. They were first introduced with the development of *StemWijzer* ("vote smarter") in the Netherlands in 1989 (Garzia et al. 2014).VAAs intervene in an increasingly crowded space of campaign communications in which the production of information is not an instrumental process for achieving a result but rather an end in itself as various parties continually contest and seek to define issues (Crozier 2012). The recent emergence of VAAs in the East Asian democracies of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan is a natural extension of online use in these countries, which rank among the heaviest users of the internet (Internet World Statistics 2015). Nevertheless, the use of the internet by political parties and others for campaign purposes has been significantly restricted in Japan and South Korea whereas in Taiwan, it is common to make widespread use of social media and other online spaces to conduct formal and informal campaigning (Wilson 2012). In South Korea, the restrictions on political speech are agreed to by both of the major parties of the left and the right as a way to contain the emergence of other parties. So restrictive are these rules that in recent years, Freedom House has downgraded South Korea's freedom of the press to "partly free" (Haggard and You 2015). VAAs, however, participate in the extensive online flows of electoral information, shaping the organization of political space in Taiwan. Given the constraints on online campaigning in Japan and South Korea, VAAs play a unique role in providing online information about parties and candidates, as they do not constitute formal campaigning for any candidate or party. VAAs in Japan and South Korea, therefore, are not subject to the same restrictions on online campaigning and therefore can exercise influence on a less crowded stage.

Although VAAs are an indirect form of campaigning, they may have consequences for the wider campaign and electoral context. In European practice, the results of VAAs have been shown to influence how parties campaign, reacting to information

from voters' use of the applications, and it has been found that they legitimate parties that otherwise would have received little consideration by voters (Garzia et al. 2014). As the use of VAAs is growing beyond the large party systems of European parliamentary democracies into an Asian context, new questions are emerging about the nature of political information, its role in shaping vote choices, the implications of VAAs for parties, and the cultural and institutional mediation of these technologies.

Consequences of VAAs on Political Campaigning

VAAs and Voter Guides

Voter guides have been around as long as people have been voting on a mass scale. Voting advice used to be predominantly a function of political parties and formal organizations such as churches, unions, or other civil society groups. Whether the advice is dispensed through paper or a digital format is not what makes VAAs particularly interesting as a topic of study. Two factors distinguish computer-based VAAs from paper voter guides, which have existed for as long as elections have been held. First, whereas voting guides indicate what positions parties and candidates favor or provide reasons to vote for one party or against another, these computerized applications guide users through a series of questions, and then users are matched with parties based on preference proximity, which can lead voters to be identified with unexpected parties or candidates. VAAs therefore can, in principal, have a transformative impact on voters, however limited those effects may be empirically (Garzia et al. 2014, 33). Second, computerized VAAs are often organized by groups of academics and/or journalists for research purposes. Consequently, VAAs are potentially independent of the agendas often promoted by voter guides that are produced and funded by various interest groups with an agenda in mind. This is not to say that VAAs are neutral advice platforms, as academics and journalists construct the issue space of the election according to some criteria and devise the algorithm for spatially rendering users in relation to parties and candidates. Issue selection and the algorithmic representation of

political space can have significant consequences for the voting advice these applications render. Different algorithms for representing the proximity of candidates and parties to voters have been shown to produce different voting advice (Louwerse and Rosema 2014). These applications thus play a role in computationally rendering political space and political relationships, which themselves can become the subject of political contestation by parties and candidates.

Electoral Campaigns and Political Information: Downs and Beyond

Electoral campaigns perform many functions. Campaigns enable candidates and party leaders to demonstrate leadership; activate supporters to engage in fundraising and organizing; provide social integration of supporters and various constituencies; create an aesthetic experience and candidate narrative; and perform instrumental functions associated with defining issue spaces and persuading voters (Gronbeck 1978). In Anthony Downs's account of electoral democracy, the informational instrumental aspects of campaigning implicate the "basic logic of voting" (1957, 36). In Downs's view, if voters are assumed to be rational utility maximizers, they will select parties and candidates with policies that are closest to their own preferences. Knowledge about policies in party manifestos is one aspect of the informational requirements of functioning electoral democracies. However, as Robert Dahl (1989, 338–339) argues, closing the gap between elites and citizens requires reducing the knowledge gap regarding policy trade-offs, risk assessment, and the like so that informed choices can be made. Such demands go beyond what a VAA can provide, particularly given the role played by events, on the one hand, and by networks of persons within the civil service and other agencies inside and outside of government, on the other hand, in shaping the policies that are adopted and their manner of implementation (Kooiman 2003; Bang 2003; Rhodes 2007). Candidate and party manifestos are but one of many potential considerations in vote choices. The complexity of political systems today renders vote

choices based solely on pre-election policy positions a weak basis on which to democratically steer political systems.

Though the informational demands of contemporary democracies exceed what VAAs can bring to the table, they may have effects on political campaigning and political behavior that are ultimately significant. As campaigns have incentives to convince voters of their proximity where no such connection exists, VAAs have been introduced to address the problem of connecting voter preferences with party policies. However, contemporary information dynamics are more complex, rendering VAAs not a neutral tool for maximizing voter utility satisfaction. Instead, they may be playing a more active role in shaping the informational space of political campaigns, particularly in these three Asian countries. How VAAs impact campaign informational space is in part connected to two related events, changes in the electoral systems of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, and changes in the electorate and their relationship with political parties. We will begin with changes in the informational space of political campaigns and its effects on the relationship between parties and voters.

Trends in Party Identification

Political parties have been undergoing significant transformation over the last 40 years or more. These changes have been driven by three trends. First, increasing complexity in societies, indicated by the growing differentiation of subsystems, has given rise to highly varied identifications that belie a stable, unidimensional ideological organization of political space (Swanson and Mancini 1996). The stable links between social cleavages, formal political organizations, and political parties have yielded to more fluid identifications and organizational practices. Although a mass party in its pure form has never really existed, cartel parties have emerged as an alternative model, focusing more on the provision of a package of policies marketed to electorates than an ideologically coherent set of policies addressing the interests of a particular cleavage (Katz and Mair 1995; 2009). This removes

ideological shortcuts and the cues supplied by one's cleavage to inform vote choices.

A second trend is the growth of "cognitive mobilization." Traditionally, political parties were the primary source of political information for most people (Michels 1966; Swanson and Mancini 1996). However, with improving levels of education and the increasing availability of political information produced by sources apart from parties and candidates, voters are becoming informed on their own (Dalton 1984; Dalton 2007b). In particular, online information sources often make available to a greater degree marginal or dissident views, which translates into support for nontraditional politics and ideologies (Gainous, Wagner, and Abbott 2015). VAAs are an extension of this process, providing independent accounts of the policy positions that the parties claim to advocate. Cognitive mobilization and modernization and growing social complexity, and the resulting decline in party membership and identification have undermined the stable identification between voters and parties in the West, where these relationships had endured for some time.

The consequences of the weakening of the cleavage system and the growth of cognitive mobilization have given rise to widespread declines in party identification. Across industrialized democracies in both the West and Asia, there has been a significant decline in strong and stable identification with political parties (Dalton 2007a; Dalton and Wattenberg 2002). This is not to say the era of political parties has come to an end, as in places such as Spain where there has been a significant erosion of trust in the largest parties, new parties are emerging at an incredible pace (Tormey 2015). But those parties often form and disappear quite quickly without gaining significant and enduring followings.

To the extent ties between political parties and electorates have been in decline in the West, there are historical and institutional factors that further weaken party identification in East Asian democracies. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan all have experienced electoral domination by a center-right party for

most of their recent experience with democracy, with a brief period of governance by the main opposition party (Grofman 1999). The South Korean party system is weakly institutionalized with little widespread identification (Hicken and Kuhonta 2014). The Japanese experience of historical domination by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has continued under electoral reforms that have reduced proportional outcomes in urban areas and continued LDP success in the countryside (Jou 2010). The idea of distance from a party or a party as "a way of perception" resonates better than Western notions of party identification, but these measures of proximity or acceptance of party frames remains weak (Matsumoto 2015, 95). The Kuomintang (KMT) party in Taiwan has likewise commanded legislative majorities for most of the country's existence postdemocratization (Grofman 1999). Yet party attachments in Taiwan are weak and volatile, with large numbers of voters not strongly identified with any party (Ho et al. 2013).

Elections and Electoral Systems

Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan each have their unique histories in transitioning to democracy, but there are some commonalities as well. Each of these countries, following a transition to democracy, has seen a period of dominance by a single party and the emergence of electoral systems that combine electoral districts, with voters selecting candidates in multimember districts using a single nontransferable vote with proportional representation based on party lists (Grofman 1999). These systems have been replaced by a combination of single-member districts and party lists (Rich 2014; Gallagher 1998). The use of VAAs emerged in the Benelux countries, in which parliamentary democracy combined with proportional representation have given rise to a large number of parties with parliamentary representation and, often, coalition governments. Such conditions create greater informational demands for voters as compared to two-party systems, in which the choice is a matter of two competing policy agendas, leadership qualities, and governing capacities.

To compare the level of electoral competition in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, we consider the effective number of parties in parliament of these three countries in comparison to their European counterparts, in which the use of VAAs was originally popularized. To compare the party systems in these European countries and those of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, we use a measure of the *effective number of parties* developed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979). The effective number of parties is calculated as $1/\Sigma\ p_i^2$, where p denotes the fractional seat share for the ith party summed over parties 1 to n, the total number of parties with representation in parliament. Although the effective number of parties can be calculated based on vote share, the seat share results are more robust and intuitive across cases (Lijphart 2012). The properties of this measure range from 1, where all of the seats are held by the same party, to S, the total number of seats in a legislative body. An effective number of parties equal to S would indicate that each seat is held by a different party. Although there are other measures of concentration such as entropy measures, and the Herfindahl–Hirshman measure of concentration, entropy-based measures tend to overstate the significance of very small parties, and the concentration measures tend to understate the significance of party systems with larger numbers of parties (Taagepera 2007). The effective number of parties based on seat share is calculated for the last
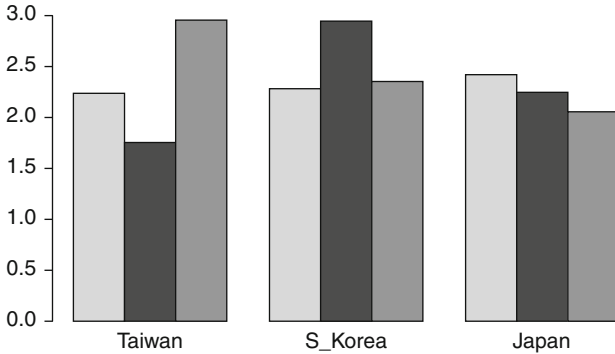

Figure 1.1 Effective number of parties in last three elections.

three legislative elections in each of these countries. The results are presented in Figure 1.1.

Across the Benelux and Scandinavian party systems, the effective number of parties in parliament is generally high, ranging from four to six effective parties (Lijphart 2012; Budge et al. 2014). This is not the same situation faced in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, which have been roughly two-party systems across all three countries over the last three election cycles. Despite their parliamentary form of government and historical use of proportional voting systems, such as the single nontransferable vote and party lists, the effective number of parties in these three cases is between 1.7 and 3, the same effective number of parties as commonly found among majoritarian systems (Bormann and Golder 2013).

These figures hide the dominance of the majority winning party in most of these elections, which bring these countries functionally to a one-party system. Dunleavy and Boucek (2003) suggest averaging the effective number of parties with the fractional seat share of the largest party. While no measure is perfect, for the sake of conceptual clarity, we keep these measures separate as each denotes different properties. The fractional share of the largest party seat share is calculated as $1/p_i$. In contrast to the effective number of parties, this measure indicates the extent to which changes in the electoral system, campaigning, or other
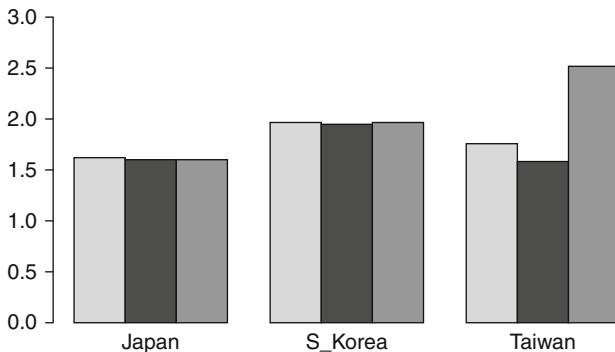

Figure 1.2   Largest party vote share in last three elections.

factors have impacted the dominance of the party with the largest vote share. The vote shares of the largest party for each of the last three elections held in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are presented in Figure 1.2.

With the exception of Taiwan in the 2012 legislative election, these figures have remained quite stable across countries and over time. This suggests that there are significant and systemic factors operating in each of these countries, which make likely parliamentary majorities rather than coalition governments. The informational demands of voters appear relatively small as most voters are choosing between two main parties, one of which achieves a significant majority, forming a government on its own. This repeated scenario produces simple questions of accountability when parties face subsequent elections.

The East Asian democracies, therefore, constitute curious cases for the emergence of VAAs: they do not possess large multiparty systems, which motivated the creation of VAAs in Western Europe, and it would seem that VAAs further erode already weak partisan attachments in these countries.

Case Selection and Comparative Logic of the Cases

This book is composed of case studies that embed VAAs within the particulars of each country's political system. The research design does not compare differences in system-level attributes reified as logically comparable across cases. To do so would obscure the implications of these attributes in relation to other aspects of each of these systems from which their particular qualities derive (Easton 1990). Taking the use of VAAs by parties, candidates, and voters as an independent variable across cases would bias the analysis by presuming that system-level differences do not make a difference and question whether a comparative research design was necessary to begin with: if system-level properties are irrelevant to the explanation, what analytical leverage is gained through the study of multiple cases? Political institutions, structures, and the like can influence the consequences stemming from the uptake of digitally mediated political activities (Jensen, Jorba, and Anduiza 2012). The

contributions of this book stem from the unique historical experiences and system-level properties of the East Asian democracies, which have given rise to East Asian experiences with VAAs and trajectories that are quite different from what we have seen in the European cases.

Case Selection

Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are very similar in many respects, having undergone transitions to democracy during the latter half of the twentieth century. These three countries are rated by Freedom House as the only fully consolidated liberal democracies in East Asia (Diamond, Plattner, and Chu 2013). They have made transitions from the single nontransferable vote to single-member districts and proportionally apportioned votes for party lists within similar time frames, and have similar experiences with largely one-party rule, with limited time in government by the largest opposition party.

The book is comprised of two parts. The first part provides a general introduction to VAAs in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan respectively, and how VAAs were received in each country. The authors are either founding persons or one of the contributors to VAA in their countries. The second part provides empirical studies of the effects of VAAs and an evaluation of VAAs' impact on democratic politics.

In chapter 2, Uekami and Tsutsumi aim to outline the characteristics and history of VAAs in Japan and discuss future issues surrounding them. From 2003 on, Japan's political parties touted their manifestos in the national elections, attracting the attention of a large number of voters. Voters were encouraged to use the parties' policy platforms to help them decide whom to vote for, and VAAs began to gain popularity. Subsequently, Japan's major newspapers and media outlets began offering VAAs, which received media coverage each time there was a national election. But there are several restrictions on VAAs in Japan. For instance, the primary users for online tools such as VAAs are thought to be young people, but the younger generation displays little interest in politics.

The history and development of Korean-style VAAs are introduced by Park, Jang, Jeong, and Yook from a comparative perspective by tracing the common traits of Korean-style VAAs since 2004. The VAAs under review in chapter 3 are 2004, 2012, and 2014 VAAs that were used for the different types of elections. This chapter discusses how issues were selected for each VAA and how the issue positions of VAA voters and parties or candidates were calculated for the different types of elections in Korea.

Chapter 4 introduces Taiwan's first VAA—iVoter—including its application and ongoing development. The name iVoter is intended to refer to "I vote," "informed vote," "intelligent vote," and "internet vote." This system was first used for the 2012 Eighth-term Legislative Yuan elections. From October 2011, when the iVoter site officially went online, until 2012, 1,400 people became iVoter members and completed an issue position diagnostic registration, while over 40,000 people (from different IP addresses) visited the website. In this chapter, Liao and Chen begin with a brief introduction of Taiwan's political landscape and its relationship with the design of the iVoter website. Then they explain the process of creating the iVoter Issue Position Test. Hereafter, user profiles are discussed. Finally, they discuss the ongoing development and design of the iVoter website as a platform for bridging the gap between representatives and voters, including the utilization of online meetings.

After introducing VAAs in each country, the book analyzes the effect of VAAs in each of these cases. In chapter 5, Tsutsumi, Uekami, and Inamasu show a potential effect of VAAs in Japan by asking the following research questions: To what degree do Japanese voters recognize parties' policy positions correctly? Can Japanese voters identify and vote for the party closest to their policy preference? Whom should VAAs target? By analyzing the internet survey data of the 2010 House of Councillors election, they show that quite a few Japanese voters could not find or incorrectly identify a party close to their policy preference, and that voters who have a small amount of correct information are

more likely to vote incorrectly. They also found that VAAs is likely to be effective for young, female voters and those who are not usually exposed to political information and are indifferent to politics.

Chapter 6, entitled "Hurdles for VAAs in the Politics of Opacity," poses a question concerning the effect of VAAs on democratic politics. Kim in this chapter focuses on analyzing and discussing the prospects and limits of using VAAs in Korean politics. The author asks the following questions: What are the significant developments in using VAAs in the 2012 election in Korea? What are the hurdles for VAAs in Korean politics? How can we view the meaning of VAAs in a larger context of democracy and citizenship? The author concludes that VAAs are in a sense a most contemporary invention for informing citizens and facilitating deliberation on election issues. However, VAAs have limits as tools of deliberation. They may even have some risks in terms of making the electoral process a simple matchmaking or policy-shopping game. Despite those limits, however, the authors conclude that VAAs have strong merits in helping voters be alert regarding their choices.

To estimate the connection and effectiveness of VAA, Wang exploit data from the iVoter program in Taiwan's 2012 legislative election, which is introduced in the fourth chapter of this book. Empirical analysis shows that candidates who are young and familiar with the internet tend to participate in the iVoter process. Contrary to the prediction, incumbents were more involved than challengers, and there is no difference between candidates from major and minor parties in terms of the level of participation. Analysis of the registered participants reveals that they were mostly young, male, and well educated. Overall, 80 percent of the participants considered iVoter as helpful, and this supportive attitude correlates with more online political participation among the least-engaged participants. Even though iVoter did not boost election turnout, a considerable proportion of iVoter participants showed up to support minor parties on election day. Implications and suggestions for future VAA development are finally discussed.

In the conclusion, Jensen and Lin point out the consequences of VAA use for users. First, across all three cases we find VAA use gives rise to greater political engagement. Second, VAA users in these countries, like internet users, are generally younger and highly educated, which is the same segment of the population that is otherwise more disengaged from electoral politics. Third, there is evidence that VAAs increase both issue voting and political discussion regarding policy issues. In addition, they also indicate that VAAs complicate political campaigns in two ways. First, they provide voters with an alternative source of information relating candidates and parties to voters. This information is beyond the control of the campaigns themselves. Second, VAAs render the terms of the campaign with respect to policy issues rather than alternative criteria on which candidates and parties may wish to campaign.