

Korean Experience of Administrative Reforms since Her Independence

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to review the Korean experience of administrative reforms since independence. We will periodize its history of administrative reforms according to major political changes into the following three periods, namely, Syngman Rhee Government(1948—1960), Democratic Party Government (latter part of 1960 and earlier part of 1961), and Military and Current Government (1961—1968). In each period we will examine the reform strategies undertaken, the utilization of central permanent reform agencies, background characteristics of reform agents, involvement of enclaves in the reform process, reform agents' structural relationship to political leadership, reform's goal orientations, external controls over the reform processes, the degree of reform effectuation, and finally the effectiveness of political control by each regime.

We assume that these dimensions of administrative reform are important for the successful innovations in the performance of a government bureaucracy, and we think most of these dimensions have correlations among themselves. By analyzing each regime according to these variables, we hope to be able to sharply contrast the three different governments by comparison and finally to arrive at propositions which will aid us in determining the directions of future reforms in this region.

Syngman Rhee Government

Upon liberation of Korea from the Japanese colonial rule there was established south of 38th parallel the U.S. Military Government in Korea and this government continued until August 1948, when the Republic of Korea Government was initiated under president Syngman Rhee's leadership. During this preindependence period the functions of the government as perceived by the Korean political leaders were the guarantee of political and cultural activities

for the achievement of independence, maintenance of law and order, supply of food, expansion of such activities as public health, recovery of transportation, road repair and government custody of former Japanese properties.

Reorganizations conducted during this period were largely around the above functions. Examples are the establishment of the legislature, withdrawal of the American military personnel in the latter period of the military government from active participation in the administrative process, and the establishment of the South Korean Interim Government, the Departments of Public Information, Public Health, Police, Transportation, and Labor, and Offices of Food Administration, Price Stabilization, and Property Custody and Railroad Police Corps, and either additions to or in expansion of the functions inherited from the Government General of Japan. Thus, as far as these functional agencies are concerned, the reorganizations under the U.S. Military Government were fairly in line with the needs perceived by the Korean leaders.

In addition to the above reforms the U.S. military government, being the crusade for the American concepts of management which was entirely new to the Korean soil, introduced staff agencies such as the civil service administration, office of planning and also various committees which were managed through hierarchical arrangement among themselves. Position classification system was also introduced though it was only in form. In some departments such as the public health and the justice, client based subunits were widely adopted.

On the other hand, the military government, because of its interim nature, was more oriented toward the maintenance of the status quo and solving of the urgent problems passively responding to the demands of the society rather than positively reforming the administration with a long range view and with the attitude regarding the administration's role as creating new needs for the society. Its merit was on its high flexibility in adjusting itself to the interests articulated by the Koreans.

With the complete withdrawal of the American personnel from the government in August 1948, the newly independent government of the Republic of Korea had to conduct administrative reforms with the Korean initiative and responsibility. The vacated positions of the bureaucracy were filled with the Koreans who had been educated by the Japanese and served at minor positions of the Japanese government general bureaucracy. Those who drafted the government organization law also had had Japanese education in law and were lawyers and law professors at the time of independence. Many of the political leaders of the new government were those who had been under exile under the colonial rule. They relied

mainly on these working staffs of legal backgrounds as to the ideas for the formal structure of the new government. The political leaders lacking imaginations as to the programs of the new government did not give guidelines with regard to the positive goals of the regime. Their only intention was to minimize the functions of the government in order to make up the deficits of the budget and to provide the new government with the minimum outlook necessary for any independent government. Thus, the only additions to the government structure of the U.S. military government were the ministries of National Defense and Foreign Affairs. Many of the other organizational units under the previous government were either merged, abolished or simplified in their structures.

They abolished the staff units under the U.S. military government. The concept of staff was alien to these Japanese educated lawyers. The position classification system was also discarded being unfamiliar and complicated institution to them and the new government civil service system was modeled after the Japanese system. Financial rules and practices and records management system were also modeled after those of the Japanese government general of the pre-liberation period.

During the Korean War from 1950 to 1953 the governmental structure did not undergo much change except in the subunits of the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Interior. No changes occurred in the ministerial lever. Horizontal coordination involving various ministries was made through a few committees such as war committee, committee for the relief of the refugees, and integrative committee for the industrial recovery. Thus, there was little quick effort to adjust the over-all governmental structure to the needs created by the Korean War which was an enormous shock from the environment to the organization of the government. It was only after the war that some significant moves were made for the reform of administration. The first of these moves was the sending of the administrators for training in the U.S. through the technical assistance programs. By the middle of the 1950's almost 100 civil servants were away for public administration training and greater number were being sent in the latter part of the 50's. The second of these moves was the creation of the Ministry of Reconstruction, and the first sincere effort was being made for the drafting of a long-range economic development plan in the planning bureau and the economic development council of the ministry.

Research department at the Bank of Korea was born during the Korean War and since then it was being built up with the young college graduates. These enclaves for long-range economic plans

came to play significant roles in the subsequent governments. The third of these moves was the creation of the Graduate School of Public Administration at Seoul National University in 1959, which in the subsequent governments actively participated in administrative reforms.

The last of the exceptions was rather sporadic and flexible structure being developed among the task-oriented higher civil servants who received foreign education and training after the independence. This loose structure was being developed largely through individual initiative and interactions among themselves seeking for similarly oriented colleagues, superiors and subordinates for each other after the postwar Korean bureaucracy. These exceptional forces came to play significant roles only at the very last period of the Syngman Rhee government when the political structure was relatively stable and the President Rhee himself relied on technocrat ministers rather than politicians for the recovery of nation's economy and the latter also highly thought of these bureaucratic elites.

Despite of these exceptional moves, the main current of the administrative reforms after the war was very similar to the pre-war period.

Simplification of the administrative structure for the sake of economy rather than readjustment of the government structure for the fulfilment of expanding requirements continued to be the main theme of reorganization. Staff agencies were regarded as overlapping units, causing administrative inefficiency, division of accountability and abuse of power. Thus, these units were always the foci of elimination and curtailment.

There was no central specialized unit permanently dealing with administrative reform either for the entire government or for a ministry. Whenever a reform was necessitated, a special ad hoc committee was formed to deal with the specific reform and the Committee was immediately dissolved after the presentation of the report. These committees were usually composed of the politicians and the latter were advised by the legally oriented and Japanese educated higher civil servants.

Reorganizations were usually dominated by these politicians and the accommodation of political interests governed the reform process extensively. Ideas as to the organizational forms came from the Japanese government structure, Japanese colonial government and the U.S. military government. Personnel and financial practices were still based on the Japanese models.

However, in the latter part of the 1950's, with the initiative of the above mentioned task oriented civil servant, business-type account was introduced into some of the business style operations of the government activities and the introduction of performance budget system was

attempted.⁽¹⁾

Democratic Party Government

Student demonstrations caused the downfall of the Syngman Rhee government and the Democratic Party Government which was based on the new Constitution began its operation from September 1960.

The new government publicly announced as its first priority policy the economic development. The movement it attempted was explicitly geared to the realization of this policy. Comprehensive examination of previous government structure was conducted in order to adjust the government structure toward the realization of this goal. Not only the post-war Japanese government structure, the U.S. military government but also the formal structures of the U.S., the Philippines, India and even communist countries were referred to as to the possible suggestions for ideas.

Various ideas derived as to the ways of restructuring individual agencies were not regarded as important unless they were developed in conjunction with the over-all coordinated reorganization plan for the entire government administrative machinery.

In order to solicit for new ideas from the public, the Democratic Party government organized Integrative Economic Council composed of the business interests, the academicians and press. This council which conducted its meetings in panel discussion style continued to work actively for more than a month until it presented to the government concrete recommendations for the reorganization plan together with new economic policies.

Still in this period there was no permanent central units specializing in administrative reform. The government party formed within its top echelon government reorganization committee composed of the politicians including some of the ministers. Four bureau chiefs from the economic ministries who were prominent within the bureaucracy because of their task-orientation, achievement and foreign training since the liberation assisted the committee at working level. The committee was dependent upon these bureaucratic elites for new ideas for organizational forms which would suit to the new needs of the government. The final report was submitted

(1) For detailed description of these reforms in financial administration, refer to Hahn-Been Lee, "The Korean Budget Reform 1955-1961. A Reformer's Self-Evaluation," prepared for the Development Administration Group/EROPA Seminar on Administrative Reform and Innovation in Asia in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 20-27, 1968, also in *Administrative Reforms in Asia* (forthcoming), edited by Hahn-Been Lee and Abelardo Samonte.

in the early part of the next year.

As pointed out above the concepts of management introduced during the U.S. military government had been entirely discarded with the initiation of the Syngman Rhee government. However, similar concepts were revived under this Democratic Party government, this time through different channels. It was through the contacts to the U.S. culture made by the civil servants who either participated in technical assistance programs and other opportunities that the U.S. governmental structures and the POSDCORB style theories of public administration were came to be known. Some of these civil servants either directly or indirectly associated themselves with the reform process.

The examples of revival of such a concept are the attempts to create planning section in each of the central agencies, the office of economic planning, the office of central supply, central intelligence bureau, national security council, and the civil service commission. The introductory statement of the report of the above reorganization committee refers to the examples of the Hoover Commissions and Haldane Committee. The national railroad, the telecommunications and government monopoly of the tobacco were recommended to apply to their operations business-type accounting system. The bureau of the budget was to have within it management analysis section.

As pointed out above the reform was strongly oriented toward the realization of the government's goal on economic development. The Economic Planning Board which was to house within it budgetary function in addition to planning and coordination, the Ministry of Construction, the Ministry of Fuel and Electric Power, merger of power generation and distribution companies, the Bureau of Medium Industries, the Bureau of Tourism, the Commission on Development of Science and Technology, expansion of rural development activities, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestocks are the good examples supporting this conclusion.

The economic development council of the Ministry of Reconstruction was given the mission to draft the five year economic development plan with the help of an American advisor. The council finished drafting the plan in January 1961. However, because of the political struggle between the factions, the government was unable to effectuate the plan immediately. And it was only on the eve of military coup that the cabinet decided to adopt the plan and made it public.

The Democratic Party government also emphasized almost to the same degree the economy accruing from the small compact organizations as in the previous government. Thus, while

creating new agencies geared to economic development it also proposed elimination, combination and integration of the existing government structure especially with regard to bureaus and sections.

Another difference compared with the previous government was that the reform agents, who actively participated in reform process, had different backgrounds from those of the Syngman Rhee government. There were very few lawyers and law oriented civil servants among these reformers. Major reform participants were higher civil servants, all of whom were of the ministries directly related with the economic functions of the government. The politicians who occupied the ministerial portfolios of these ministries were the key members of the reorganization committee of the government party. They were not, in their backgrounds, nationalistic leaders who had joined the independence movement during colonial period as under the Syngman Rhee government. Both the above civil servants and the ministers were task oriented technocrats. In this sense the structure between these civil servants and the political leadership was consistent.

In spite of the ambitious and comprehensive approach to the administrative reform affecting all of the agencies of the government and despite of the consistent structure between the bureaucratic elites and the political leaders, the reform proposals were not effectuated until the regime was overthrown by the military coup in May 1961. The Democratic Party which had been the major opposing force under Syngman Rhee regime was divided into two factions upon becoming the majority party in the National Assembly after the student revolution. Societal demands from the various interests including the student groups needed urgent solutions by the government. Social unrest was at its peak since independence. However, the government was unable to launch any new significant measures to meet these demands, with only exception being the national physical construction movement which was temporary in nature and lasted for only about a half year.⁽²⁾ Ineffectiveness of the Democratic Party government in the exercise of control over political process affected adversely its ability to arrive at immediate decisions and to carry them out. Thus the government was unable to take a single measure of reform until its downfall in May 1961.

(2) For detailed description of this movement, refer to Daniel Kie-Hong Lee, "National Construction Service, A Case Study, Korea's Experience in Utilization of Underemployed Manpower Resources (Draft), United Nations, Asian Institute for Economic Development and Planning.

The Military and Current Government

Upon take-over of the government the military dissolved the Natinal Assembly and local councils and established Supreme Council for National Reconstruction (SCNR) which was to supervise the executive and the judiciary in addition to its legislating function.

The SCNR had within it a government reorganization subcommittee in which the faculty members of the Graduate School of Public Administration (GSPA) and other scholars of public adminiistration acted as advisors. There was also established Administrative Management Bureau within the Ministry of Government Administratoin of the Executive Department, which also conducted administrative reforms. The faculty members of the GSPA also participated in these reforms. The staffs of the Economic Development Council joined the Planning Bureau of the Ministry of Construction and later the Economic Planning Board. They drafted the new first five year economic development plan according to the guidelines given by the SCNR. In drafting the plan the research staffs of the Bank of Korea and some faculty members of the economic departments of the universities and higher civil servants of the ministries directly associated with the economic functions of the government cooperated and sometimes competed among themselves as to the soundness of different plans.⁽³⁾

Thus we find here in the initial period of the military government there were multiple channels of reform idea formulation and the enclaves which had been built up from the days of the Syngman Rhee government exercised significant roles in influencing the reform process of the military government. The military leaders were task oriented and bureaucratic technocrats in their backgrounds. They thus protected and utilized these civilian technocrats despite of the large scale purges of the bureaucracy conducted by the military.⁽⁴⁾ The structural relationship between these members of the enclaves and the political leadership was consistant and it was characterized by the latter's dependence upon the former for the idea formulation.

There were no longer lawyers or law oriented civil servants among those who actively associated themselves with the reform process. Rather, these reformers were strongly oriented

(3) For the description and analysis of the decision process of this first five year economic development plan, cf. Suk Choon Cho, A Comparative Analysis of Two Reforms under the Military Regime in Korea, prepared for the Development Administration Group/EROPA Seminar on Administrative Refrom and Innovation 1968, in *Administrative Reform in Asia* (forthcoming), edited by Hahn Been Lee and Abelardo Samonte.

(4) For the description of these purges, see Suk Choon Cho, "Military Oligarchy and Reorganization of the Korean Government," prepared for the first research seminar of the Development Administration Group/EROPA, Bangkok, Thailand, March 18-23, 1968.

toward the American managerial concepts and practices derived either from the military management training or public administration training.

The government reorganization subcommittee was dissolved after it presented reorganization plan to the SCNR. Around the end of 1963 when the military government was about to hand over the government to the incoming new civilian hands, there was established again in the SCNR the government reorganization committee which subdivided itself into four task force subcommittees. Both the previous and the subsequent committees tackled the reorganizations of the over-all governmental structure to affect virtually every agency of the government. It was comprehensive in its objective and scope.

The military government not only brought about many new reform plans but also carried out virtually all of them. The political structure was centralized and the government was able to control the political process effectively though dominantly by means of coercion.⁽⁵⁾ The capacity for political control was positively associated with the execution of the reform plans.

The military government during two years and a half period of its rule effected 12 major reorganizations while 13 years of previous government recorded only 6 reorganizations of the similar scale. The attitude of the military was not to regard the economy accruing out of a reorganization as the most important criterion but to regard an organization as a means for the achievement of specific programs. Thus whenever the means is thought unsuited for this purpose it was to be abolished and reorganized. Simple structure was not necessarily the virtue as under the previous government.

Such attitude made the reforms under the military government to be strongly goal-oriented in the formulation of reform ideas and in the process of their execution.

Immediately after the takeover of the government the military government announced its public pledges whose program areas can be summerized as follows:

1. Strengthening anti-communism posture.
2. Anti-corruption and rebuilding morality.
3. Reconstruction of national economy.

The new agencies established during this period can be summerized neatly under these goals as follows:

1. anti-communism posture; central intelligence agency and joint chiefs of staff:
2. anti-corruption and morality; revolutionary prosecutors' office, revolutionary court, and

(5) With regard to political structure under the military government, cf. Suk Choon Cho, *Ibid.*

national reconstruction movement:

3. economic reconstruction; economic planning board, national construction office, ministry of construction. rural development and agricultural extension office, office of national railroad, office of labor, Ulsan development planning office, Korea electric corporation.

We can conclude that the reorganizations under the military government was highly goal-oriented.

Other reforms were aimed at raising the level of managerial efficiency based on the concepts introduced through foreign trainings. New agencies such as the Office of Supply, the Office of Planning and Control and the Bureau of Administrative Management were the examples of this kind. New practices such as the planning and programming system,⁽⁶⁾ records management, report control, work measurement and simplification, position classification system, staff study, situation rooms, briefing by charts, and large scale conduct of in-service training for virtually all of the civil servants are the similar examples.

The concept of life and staff first introduced under the U.S, military and later discarded with the initiation of the Syngman Rhee government in 1948 was for the first time recovered in large scale under the government of the military through the introduction of strong staff unit planning and coordination office within every major agency and staff agencies to the prime minister.

There was also introduced for the first time in history, permanent and central unit specializing in administrative reform. The Administrative Management Bureau of the Ministry of Government Administration was such unit.

During the military government there was little effort to let the political interests including the clientele groups of various agencies and the general public participate in the reform process. The only participants were the military, the civil servants and some of the academicians from universities.

With the launching of the civilian government whose power structure remains to be similar to the military government, the government initiated in June 1964 the Administrative Improvement Research Commission directly under the president. The commissioners have vice-minister status in their rank and it is composed of seven task forces whose members are career civil servants. By The end of 1967, it submitted to the president 28 reports recommending various

(6) For the analysis of this reform, cf. Suk Choon Cho, "A Comparative Analysis of Two Reforms under the Military Regime in Korea," *op. cit.*

reforms. However, important recommendations are not usually effectuated by the ministries concerned. Presidential support to the commission has not been strong and both the commissioners and the civil servants within this agency have not enjoyed high prestige within the government bureaucracy compared with those in the teſular ministries.

There have not been established as many agencies as under the military government. However, the significant reforms undertaken by the new civilian government had the following characteristics. With the successful execution of the first five year economic development plan, the government continued to emphasize the high rate of economic growth. Major reforms were geared to this direction as reflected in such new agencies as the office of forestry, the office of taxation, the office of fishery, the ministry of science and technology and more than ten government corporations. The construction of economic infra-structure was emphasized as prime government activities and new vigorous leadership appeared within the agencies responsible for these programs. New managerial techniques involving computers and project management were introduced within these agencies. Metropolitan planning and urban renewal also received renewed emphasis and there have been innovative plans and vigorous executions changing the outlook of cities rapidly. Thus with the growing confidence and hope in economic development, the major reforms were undertaken in the program ereas by the agencies responsible for these programs rather than by the central reform agencies such as the Administrative Management Breau and the Administrative Improvement Research Commission. These innovations in the program areas were made possible because of the task-oriented leadership by the president and his confidence and dependence upon the similar oriented leadership of these agencies. The government has been relatively stable over several years enabling the political leadership exercise effective control over the political decision making process.

Summary of the Characteristics of Administrative Reforms by Different Regimes

By way of summery of the descriptions presented so far, a concise table is presented hereunder to compare different characteristics of administrative reforms conducued by each regime.

Dimensions of Analysis	Syngman Rhee Gov't	Democratic Party Gov't	Military & Current Gov't
degree of reform effectuation	high	very low	very high
goal orientation	realatively low	realatively high	very high

reform agents' background	law & program knowledge	law, managerial & program knowledge	managerial & program knowledge
economy emphasis	economy is prime criterion	economy is one of the major criteria	economy is secondary criterion
enclave growth	birth	built-up	utilization
structural consistency between bureaucratic elites and political leadership	consistent only in latter part of 50s	consistent	consistent
central permanent reform agency	none	none	yes
incremental vs. comprehensive strategy	incremental	comprehensive	comprehensive under military and incremental under civilian gov't
effectiveness of political control	medium	low	high
external control over reform process	medium	high	low

Conclusion

We assume there exist correlations among the dimensions of analysis used in this paper. The most important concern of ours is how to make a reform successful. Success and or failure are relative concepts which can be placed on a continuum. The concept of relative success of a reform may be difficult to operationalize for empirical test. Therefore, we will use the degree of effectuation, that is the degree of formal execution, as the criterion for success. Out of the different dimensions of analysis used in the above table we select as our major concern, 'degree of reform effectuation' and use it as our dependent variable. The reforms under the military and current government has been most successful by this criterion. With regard to the other dimensions there are similarities and dissimilarities between this government and the prior governments.

The results obtained during this period was evidently the combined results of (1) the high degree of goal orientation, (2) the attitude taking economy as secondary criterion, (3) reform agents' background of managerial and program knowledge, (4) the use of central permanent reform agencies, (5) high degree of political control, (6) consistent structure between the bureaucratic elites and the political leadership, (7) low degree of external control over reform process, (8) comprehensive and incremental strategies adopted, and (9) the use of built-up enclaves in the

reform process.

With regard to each of these dimension the following further observations can be made. With regard to reform strategies, we meant by 'incremental strategy' the decision aimed at curing specific ills and a single step which, in isolation, might be minor departure from the past.⁽⁷⁾ This strategy is not oriented toward system-wide changes. In the process of change higher degree of bargaining and compromise will dominate.⁽⁸⁾

On the other hand comprehensive strategy aims at curing the all ills at once. Therefore, it aims at system-wide changes. Since it is wide in scope and all-at-once approach it necessarily entails more resistance.

With regard to the Korean experience of administrative reforms we can make here an important observation that *a reform strategy whether it is comprehensive or incremental does not by itself have relevance to the success or failure of the reform.*⁽⁹⁾ This is testified by the fact that under the the military and current government both strategies were successful and comprehensive approach adopted by the Democratic Party government resulted in failure.

Secondly, *the effectiveness of political control is one of the most crucial variable affecting reforms' success.* Any reform entails resistance by various vested interests. For the over-coming of this resistance the political leadership should be able to control political process effectively. The failure of administrative reforms under the Democratic Party government was largely due to the lack of this factor, while the subsequent government, which was more successful in reforms, had higher degree of political control.

Thirdly, *the existence of multiple enclaves and their utilization by the political leadership also seems to be the variable of this kind.*⁽¹⁰⁾

The success of the military and current government was also due to the fact that the enclaves born during the Syngman Rhee government have grown up in size, numbers and orientations.

(7) Alfred Diamant, "Innovation in Bureaucratic Institution", *PAR* (March 1967) No.1, pp. 77-87.

(8) With regard to similar concepts for both incremental and comprehensive strategies, refer to Amitai Etzioni, "Mixed Scanning: A Third Approach to Decision Making," *PAR*, (December 1967) No. 5 pp. 385-392, Charles E. Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," *PAR*, (March 1959), No. 1, pp. 77-99 and Hahn-Been Lee, "The Concept, Structure and Strategy of Administrative Reform," prepared as Introduction to a Symposium of the Development Administration Group/EROPA, edited by Hahn-Been Lee and Abelardo Samonte, *Administrative Reforms in Asia* (forthcoming), pp. 14-18.

(9) For the same point, cf. Hahn Been Lee, *Ibid.*

(10) For Similar concept, cf. S.N. Eisenstadt, *Political Systems of Empires*, Free Press of Glencoe, 1963. ch. 12.

Fourthly, *structural relationship between the bureaucratic elites, the enclaves and the political leadership including the task elite and power elite should be consistent in the direction of their goal and task orientation.*⁽¹¹⁾ It was due to such structure that reform moves were made during the latter part of Syngman Rhee government and Democratic Party government and effectuated under the military and current government.

Fifthly, *the reform agents' background should be oriented toward management and programs rather than toward law.* In the military and current government there were very few reformers whose background was dominated by legal training. Especially during the current civilian government significant reforms were made in the program sectors associated with economic development of the country.

Finally, *whether there are central permanent specialized reform agencies does not seem to affect the success or failure of a reform,* because under the current government major innovations were carried out in program agencies with their own initiative and interaction with the president rather than with the participation by the reform agencies of this nature.

In conclusion, *an administrative reform is more likely to succeed to the degree the structural relationship between the bureaucratic elites and multiple enclaves with the political elites are consistent in their goal orientation, managerial and program orientation and the latter depend upon and utilize the former while exercising effective control over political process.*

(11) For the relationship between political elite structure and elite roles, cf. Hahn-Been Lee *Korea: Time, Change, and Administration*, Honolulu, East-West Center Press, 1968 pp. 35-39.