



The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Public Governance: The Experience of South Korea

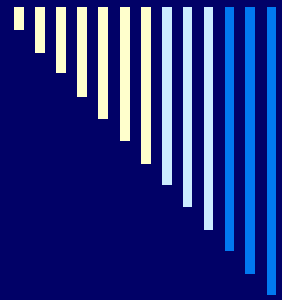
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Euiyoung Kim

Dean, Center for International Exchanges

Kyung Hee University

euiyoung@khu.ac.kr



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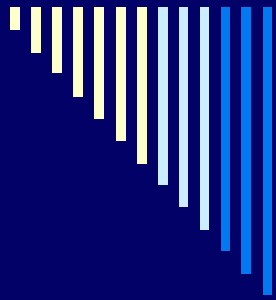
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I. Theoretical Perspectives

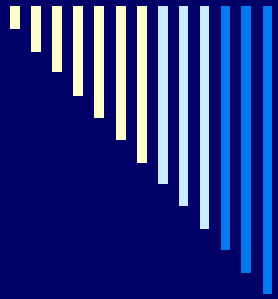
Three models of public administration

	Public administration	Public management	Responsive governance
Citizen-state relationship	Obedience	Entitlement	Empowerment
Accountability of senior officials	Politicians	Customers	Citizens and stakeholders
Guiding principles	Compliance with rules and regulations	Efficiency and results	Accountability, transparency and participation
Criteria for success	Output	Outcome	Process
Key attribute	Impartiality	Professionalism	Responsiveness



Responsive Governance (UN DESA, 2005)

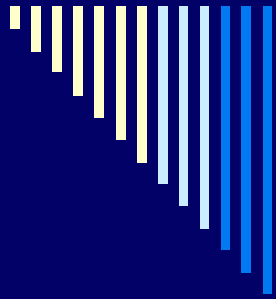
The governance model raises a set of concerns different from those preoccupying advocates of the NPM model. It emphasizes a government that is open and responsive to civil society, more accountable and better regulated by external watchdogs and the law. A strong role is proposed for “voice” and for civil society “partnerships” through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community participation. Governance models thus tend to focus more on incorporating and including citizens in all their stakeholder roles rather than simply satisfying customers, a theme that echoes the notion of “creating public value”.



Social Capital Perspective (Robert Putnam, 1993)

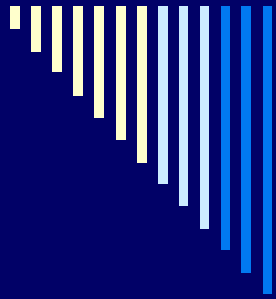
Putnam (1993)'s dictum, “*strong society, strong state.*”

The synergistic relationship between civil society and democratic governance has both a demand side and a supply side. On the demand side, a vigorous civil society will expect better government, demand more effective public service, and act collectively to achieve the shared goals of citizens. On the supply side, the performance of the polity is facilitated by the social infrastructure of civil society, the democratic values of citizens, and their social ability to collaborate for shared interests.



Civil Society and Democratic Governance (Larry Diamond, 1999)

By enhancing the accountability, responsiveness, inclusiveness, effectiveness, and hence legitimacy of the political system, a vigorous civil society gives citizens respect for the state and positive engagement with it. In the end, this improves the ability of the state to govern and to command voluntary obedience from its citizens. In addition, a rich associational life may also multiply the capacities of groups to improve their own welfare, independently of the state. Effective grassroots development efforts may thus help to relieve the burdens of expectation fixed on the state .



Mutual Empowerment of state and society (Peter Evans, 1997)

Criticizing the zero-sum antinomy of the state-versus-society perspective, the argument emphasizes the positive-sum interaction between state and society: interactions or linkages between state segments and social segments have the effect of creating more power for both sides. Whether this is called synergy, co-production, or joint efforts to carry out reforms, the argument finds that “under certain preferential circumstances mutual empowerment can be a feasible developmental strategy both nationally and locally and even can develop into an alternative pathway to democracy.



III. South Korean Experience

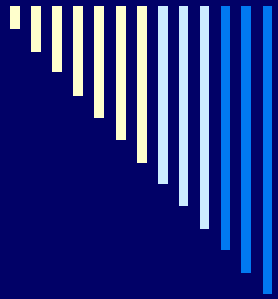
1987 - Democratization



1990s - Associational Revolution

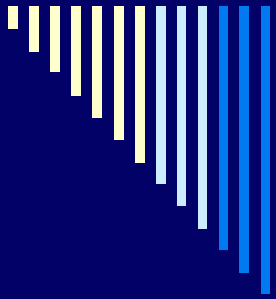


2000s – Toward democratic governance?



1. Democratization in 1987

The 1987 democratic transition provided people with basic civil and political rights that had been denied or distorted in the past. This new situation laid a secure institutional foundation upon which a vibrant civil society could develop, and at the same time, created a free and safe public space in which South Korean people could organize independent civic associations.



2. Associational Revolution in 1990s

There are more than 30,000 NGOs in South Korea; more than 56% of the NGOs were established in the 1990s.

These new civic organizations have led the associational revolution in South Korea as a succession of the traditional democratization movements.

NGOs as the most trusted institution (Gallop and WEF data)

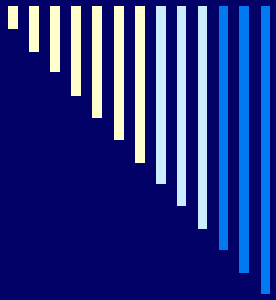
NGOs' Influence (ex. Frequency of newspaper coverage)



3. Toward democratic governance?

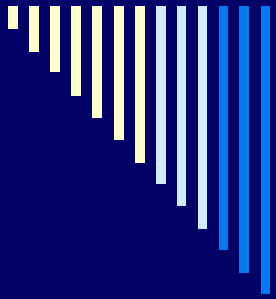
Prior to the 1987 democratic transition, state-society relations in South Korea was inherently antagonistic and characterized by constant, violent confrontations between militant people's movement groups and repressive authoritarian regimes. In the post-transition period, the relationship between the state and civil society began to change .

Particularly, the reformist democratic governments needed strong support from civil society to counter the resistance of vested interests and conservative forces. Consenting to the legitimacy of the reformist governments, NGOs in turn became more affirmative toward cooperating with the government.



It was under the Kim Young Sam government that a more cooperative relationship between NGOs and the government first developed. The government began to support NGOs financially, consider their policy proposals seriously, and on occasion even enact these into laws.

Under the Kim Dae Jung government, the relationship shifted even more toward one of cooperation, complement, and mutual empowerment. One observer argues that “for the first time in Korean history, the government tried to accept NGOs as a formal partner of national governance



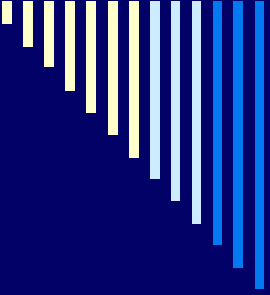
Roles and interaction mechanism between the government and the civil society have changed; the Participatory Government [of President Roh Moo-Hyun] has deviated from the former authoritative, closed, and unilateral administration. The “good governance” for balanced participation of civil society and government regarding state affairs has been emphasized. Hence, the current government reform concentrates on active participation of government employees, civil groups, target groups, people, and the government itself in the reform process (MOGAHA, 2005b, p. 12)



III. Cases

1. Blacklist Campaign

The campaign was launched in January 2000, three months before the National Assembly elections. Composed of some 900 civic organizations, the Citizens' Solidarity for the 2000 General Elections reviewed the backgrounds of all candidates and blacklisted 86 corrupt and incompetent candidates who had engaged in military coups or other antidemocratic activities, corruption, violations of election laws, tax evasion, draft dodge, and other illegal or immoral activities.



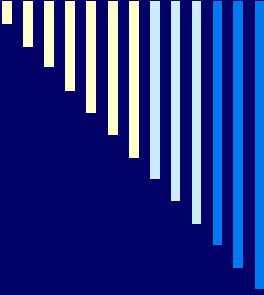
Various survey results showed that 60 to 90 percent of the Korean people supported the rejection campaign. In the end, 59 out of the 86 blacklisted politicians were defeated in the April election, that is, 68.6 percent or 2 out of 3 blacklisted candidates failed to be elected. More surprisingly, 95 percent of those listed by the Citizens' Solidarity were defeated in Seoul and its vicinities.

It is argued that the campaign has raised the quality of Korean politics by educating the public, reducing the influence of regionalism on peoples' voting decisions, and inducing the major parties to recruit younger candidates untainted by corruption or antidemocratic behavior. Some even say that it was a voters' revolution in the spirit of "the June 1987 democratic movement," referring to the month of peak popular mobilization that finally brought down authoritarianism in Korea.



2. Pharmaceutical Reform

The essence of the pharmaceutical reform was to mandate the separation of drug prescribing and dispensing. Before the reform was implemented, physicians and pharmacists both prescribed and dispensed drugs, resulting in the overuse and misuse of drugs. The basic idea of the reform was to change the provider's economic incentives by eliminating their profit from selling drugs that had been a major source of their income.



In this case, NGOs played an active role in the whole policy process from the agenda-setting stage to the enactment stage. Empowered by the government, civic groups consisting mainly of progressive academicians and former people's movement activists were significantly involved in raising the pharmaceutical reform as a critical social issue, undermining the resistance of doctors and pharmacists, pushing the presidents of the Korean Medical Association and the Korean Pharmaceutical Association to agree on major concerns, and even participating in policy implementation of some technical issues.

The reform would not have been implemented without the strong demand and support of civil society and civic groups (PSPD, 2000).



3. Anti-Corruption Act

1. Agenda setting stage

Publicizing anti-corruption issues and anti-corruption index.

Ex) CCEJ's Center for the abolishment of the irregularities and corruption(1993)

People's Solidarity for Anti-Corruption (1999) - 800 different civic organizations

2. Policy formulation stage

Legislative campaigns for the Anti-corruption Act

Ex) Active signature seeking drive (1 million people) → Legislation of the 2001 anti-corruption

Act → Establishment of the Independent Korea Commission for Anti-corruption (2002)

3. Policy implementing stage

Applying anti-corruption practices through continuous education and training by civil society

Ex) CCBG's anti-corruption education for civil servants



4. Education Revolution in Pusan

- Public education reform efforts in Pusan led by civil society organizations such as NGOs, PTAs, churches and Buddhist temples, and businesses.

 - Governance in action
 - Local government: training parent teachers
 - Parents: part-time teaching
 - NGOs: monitoring and auditing
 - Churches and temples: providing after-school classrooms
 - Businesses: donating books and other education materials
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IV. Remaining Problems

1. Danger of overpoliticization

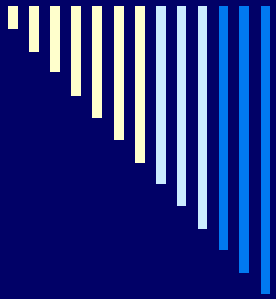
NGOs' direct and excessive political participation as in the case of the blacklist campaign may damage NGOs' neutrality and credibility. This is particularly important in South Korea because most of the Korean people value the nonpartisanship and purity of NGOs and strongly expect NGOs to remain uncontaminated by dirty politics.



2. Too close for comfort?

It is a question of whether NGOs are getting so close to the government that their credentials for independence and autonomy are lost or weakened as a result.

In the pharmaceutical reform process, some of the NGOs were even funded by the government for their supportive activities, which raised serious questions on their neutrality and NGO credentials. Considered an ally of the government rather than an independent force, the NGOs even became the target of criticism when the reform ran into various difficulties such as lengthy physician strikes and consumer dissatisfaction.



3. Weak capacity of NGOs

Civil Society Index (CIVICUS, Perfect Score: 3)

Citizen Participation: 1.3

Resource: 1.1

Policy Impact: 2.5

Citizen Empowerment: 1.7

Meeting Social Needs: 1.7