

Civil Society and Bureaucratic Corruption in Korea:

with Focus on Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

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ABSTRACT

Korea has become stained with too many corruption scandals from the power corruption to minor bribery by low ranking civil servants. Bureaucratic corruption is a serious crime causing all the people's suffering trouble. Anticorruption in bureaucracy can succeed only with systematic and integrated strategies. Now a new approach relevant to this age is needed than ever before. Most of all, we need to find out the causes of corruption. And on its basis, we should provide for controlling strategies for anti-corruption. The issue of corruption is now treated in the international level as well as in the domestic level. Thus, anti-corruption is an inevitable task for us to survive in the age of globalization. This enormous corruption in Korea cannot be overcome only by the institution or one-time punishment, and therefore, the new roles of civil organizations and NGOs are seriously needed.

In this context, this paper is aimed at suggesting such measures as follows.

First, there should be an open area of civil society, which is of citizens, for citizens and by citizens. Second, the civil society should be able to play as a mediator between the government and the citizens. Third, in order to keep the neutrality non-profit organizations (NPO) should be created other than the NGOs. Fourth, the Korean NGOs should open their eyes much wider so that they may consolidate international cooperation with the rest of the world to face the common issues of the global village.

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Introduction

As the former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali noted that the twenty-first century is the age of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the NGO, the fifth power today is one of the most popular topics. Now the civil society serves not only as an institutional mechanism for democratic consolidation, but also as a major power for social democratization against authoritarian society. It is expanding the activities from domestic politics to transnational issues such as human rights, women, disasters, child abuses, social & economic justice and anti-corruption. It is even attempting to form a global alliance. (Commission on Global Governance, 1995)

Peter Drucker(1989) saw the civil society or the third sector from the government and the businesses as a new counter-culture. Jeremy Rifkin(1998) emphasized the importance of the civil society in the coming information society. (Joo Sung-Soo, 1998) Robert Putnam considered it as a sector generating social capital. Francis Fukuyama(1995) argued that the NGO is emerging as a new democratic paradigm by saying that the scholars these days gave up the hope of social engineering and that liberal political & economic institutions depend on the active civil society for their viability. The fact is that irregularities and corruption, no matter what the value judgement of them, are obviously present in the Korean society today. Corruption in the bureaucratic society has now become *modus operandi* as a form of social norm and controls the values and behaviors of ordinary citizens. This originates from the power-oriented public administration and a long history of Confucianism. Bureaucracy, as Max Weber's bureaucracy, is familiar with authoritarian control system under the order-dominant environment, which discourages individual creativity.

In fact, the governmental bureaucracy is the biggest organization in a society and the most important area. It has the responsibility of maintaining orders to pursue national interests and of distributing values. Thus, the administrative system is in a critical position to improve progress of the domestic society or to deteriorate it. The rise and fall of a nation-state depend on how seriously the bureaucrats perform their duties and that is where their responsibilities exist. The Korean society, however, has a dual perspective toward the bureaucrats' roles and morals. They are implicitly expected to work better and be more ethical than other people do. This makes them often pretend over-upright and more desirous of social success. In this circumstance, passive and easy-going attitudes, converse of means and ends and government-first behaviors fuel the flame of corruption. Unless such traditional attitudes are eradicated the possibility of corruption will always exist. Kim Dae-Jung administration's reformatory will toward developed society, i.e. knowledge and information society, on the occasion of the new millennium is in the hands of bureaucrats. On the corruption index list, which the Transparency International(TI) announced, Korea ranked fiftieth together with Lithuania

among 99 countries of the world. So far each and every president has made a nationwide reform so severely, but in vain. Some parts showed progress, but others not. The general services for the public have become rather clearer, but if they are concerned with any interests, the bribery still prevails, and the bureaucrats gain illegal incomes even with the pressure on the related agencies. Now is the time for all the bureaucrats to make a firm resolution to allow themselves just the legal salaries and to make a transparent administration. Also the monitoring roles of NGOs are called for than ever before. The civil society is being required of active roles to settle social problems. This article is aimed to show how the NGOs should prevent the general bureaucratic corruption and to seek for the possible ways to do so. At the same time the paper will examine the capability of civil society by observing what measures the civil society can perform for anti-corruption. Making the most of NGOs' effective and sustainable strategies will help the government's anti-corruption policies, and further the transparency and democracy of the Korean society.

Overview of Korean Civil Society

With Samuel Huntington's the third wave of democratization (Huntington 1991), the NGO can be conceptualized as a political actor in the public administration, an interest group, sometimes as a form of association. The term 'NGO' first appeared in the first chapter of 'Save the Children Fund' established in the UK during the World War I. Caritas created as form of NGO in 1915 began its relief activities for the war victims during the World War II. The UN employed civil organizations for economic aid to underdeveloped countries in 1948 and since then, the NGOs have their basis to take part in international organizations other than UN. In the 1980s the activities of NGOs have enormously grown worldwide, and the OECD announced that the number of NGOs has increased from 1,600 in 1980 to 5,000 in 1997. (OECD, 1996 DAC Report) Now the number of international NGOs is up to 38,000 and more than 1,000,000 including unofficial ones.

The NGOs have made outstanding progress in the late 20th century because of political and social variables. The civil society was getting rich with the help of rise of economic growth and technology of information & communication in spite of the so-called four crises in the 20th century crisis of welfare state, development, environment and socialism(Salamon, 1994: 115).

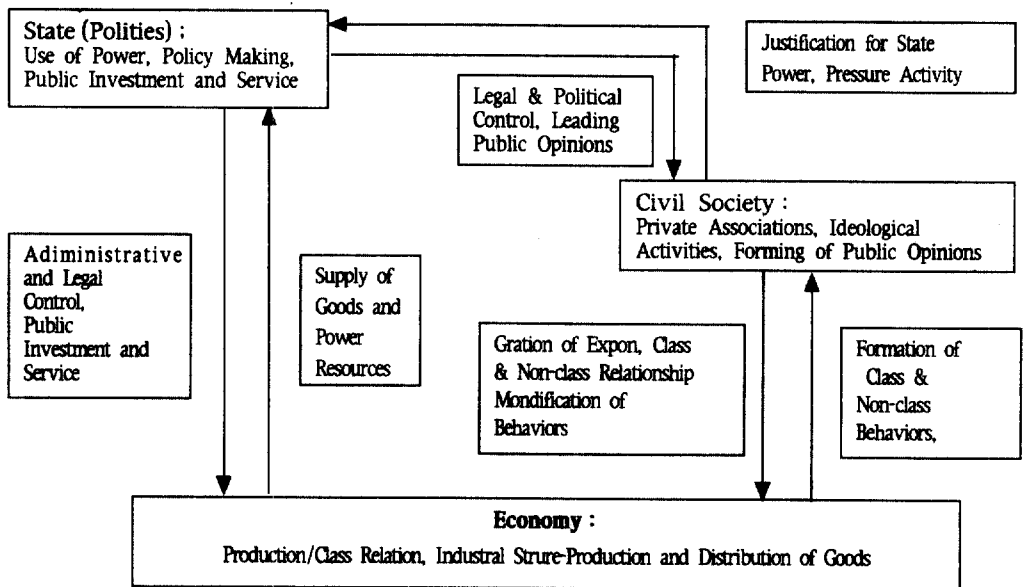
Korea, however, did not grow enough to have separate civil society from the state because of authoritarian bureaucracy, and also there was not much support for civil society because of Park Jung-Hee's export-oriented industrial policy. So far Korea was confined to the major issues of breakaway from militarization and social democratization. The civil society was only focused on the conflicts with the state in specific

〈Table 1〉 Number of NGOs

Year	Number of NGOs	Year	Number of NGOs
1909	176	1992	27,190
1981	13,234	1994	31,085
1988	24,924	1996	38,243

Source : Union of International Association Yearbook of International Organizations, 1996 / 9
(London : K.G. Saur, 1997)

〈 Figure 1〉 Location of the Civil Society



Source : Jeong Tae-Suk, Kim Ho-Ki, Yoo Pal-Moo (1995, p. 270)

areas. That is why the theories on the relationship between the state and the civil society under the civil government were not fully developed. (Kim Gwang-Sik : 1997) With the 6.29 Declaration (June Democratic Demonstration) of the late Jun Doo-Hwan administration in the 1980, the desire for democracy began to explode. For political democracy the capability of civil society was growing although a little. There emerged a variety of active social movements to face the pluralistic society. More and more civil

organizations were created in the diverse areas, for example, environment, poverty and feminism. The civil government expanded the political areas as well as civil society. Civil movements free of political ideology and social class were subcategorized instead of reformative and class-centered social movements. Considering that the democracy is now quite mature and that there are few progressive intellectual groups, the NGOs of Korea must wage consistent civil movements and have autonomy of decision making, independence of the political sector and pursuit of public good.

In addition, there appeared more NGOs as a monitor of national policies, a remover of corruption and alternative policy maker. (Shin Myung-Soon, 1995 : Yoo Pal-Moo, 1995) As in the Figure 1, Gramscian perspective notes that the civil society is linked with both politics and economy, influencing hegemony all over the society as a part of upper structure.

Since the Democratic Demonstration of June 1987 in particular, the hegemony exploded with democratization and liberalization in the Korean society, and it took a lot of effect on the progress of the civil society. Associational interest groups have begun to appear in Korea due to the changes of industrial and social structures since 1960, which promoted the growth of Korean NGOs such as Citizen's Coalition for Economic Justice and Korean Federation for Environmental Movement. Compared to those in the West, the Korean NGOs are still undeveloped in their quality and quantity. Considering their short history, however, they showed outstanding growth in number as in the Table 2.

As in the Table 3, the NGOs in the field of citizens, environment, youth and human rights are mostly established after 1987. Sixty-two percent of the NGOs for citizens, especially, and 51.5% of those for the environment were created after the Kim Young-Sam administration in 1993. These NGOs are newly established ones during the last three years for the most part. Besides, the NGOs for the youths also, 48.9% of them and 44.8% of the NGOs for human rights were created after the Kim Young-Sam administration. Consequently this means that those NGOs in such areas as citizens, youth, environment and human rights rarely existed before 1987. (Kim Hyuk-Rae: 1997)

Limits of NGOs and Measures for Them

Although the Korean NGOs very well performed their duties of monitoring the state power, they are lack of visible outcomes or productive results. In order for them to fully do their role of monitoring bureaucratic corruption they must strengthen the institutional support and renew their activities. To do this the NGOs first must find out the problems and analyze the limits, and seek for new roles. So the problems of NGOs can be listed as follows.

〈Table 2〉 Situation of Korean NGOs

Cat gory	Head Organizat ions	Brach Offices	Category	Head Organizat ions	Branch Offices
Labor	129	420	National Religions	10	73
Agriculture & Fishing	40	163	Folk Religions	3	15
Youth	75	129	Religions in General	8	
Living	58	164	Catholic	47	78
Human Rights	52	28	International	50	57
Wen	136	334	Others	34	157
Citizens	212	396	Sports & Leisure	82	161
Poverty	25	44	Korean Compatriots Overseas	471	
Medical	104	315	Academic Groups	47	
			Scholar	5	14
Environment	123	88	Major Economies	6	47
Edction	83	93	Economic & Management	8	
Pres & Publication	63	1	Technology, Inspection and Monitoring	25	21
Welfare	316	969	Research	26	1
Culture & Arts	305	205	Research Unions	21	
Buddhism	80	120	Industry	53	96
Christianity	138	383	Industry	203	135
Confucianism	8	42	Industry	157	432
Won Buddhism	19	10	Voluntary Service	44	184
Politics, Public Administration, Laws	17	42	National Unification	107	108
Sub -Total				3,899	5,569
Total				9,468	

Source : Civil Newspaper (1997), Overview of Korean NGOs

〈 Table 3〉 Starting Years of NGOs in the Specific Areas (Unit : %)

Starting Years	Politics	Human Rights	Environment	Citizens	Women	Youth	Disabled
Before 60s	3.9	0	0	1.4	13.3	4.4	5.0
1961 ~ 70	2.0	3.5	2.8	0	11.1	0	1.7
1971 ~ 79	3.9	3.5	4.2	1.4	4.5	3.3	5.8
1980 ~ 86	17.7	13.8	1.4	8.5	11.1	2.2	21.5
1987 ~ 92	35.3	20.7	37.5	25.4	35.6	40.2	46.3
1993 ~ 96	35.3	44.8	51.4	62.0	24.5	48.9	21.5
Unknown	2.0	13.8	2.8	1.4	0	1.1	0

Source : Ibid.

First, it is doubtful whether the NGOs are adequately equipped with knowledge and professionalism. The NGOs today are called upon to provide for alternative solutions not only monitoring national politics and bureaucratic corruption. How can they prepare for the new century with professional knowledge such as national unification, environment, global disasters, population, budget monitoring, traffic, science, education, economy and trade in the pluralistic society? Alvin Toffler emphasized that the Adhocracy system or quick reaction system and decision-making system should be built up, pointing out the inefficiency of bureaucracy. Thus it is urgent for the NGOs to have a renewed system with professionalism and information in order to react quickly. If the Korean NGOs fail to have such professionalism, their anti-corruption activities will prove inefficient just as one only sees the whole picture of wood but not a tree specifically.

Second, one of the most serious problems of the Korean NGOs is their finance. Although most of them operate on the basis of their members' donation, few are financially independent with it. Rather the NGOs are depending on the government or business companies. Last month Civil Society, monthly journal, took a poll with 400 Seoul citizens, which revealed that 85.6% of the respondents were in favor of the NGOs but that only 4.7% of them do donations. So the NGOs are very keen to with the government projects and the government assisted them with the budget of 15 billion won.

〈 Table 4 〉 Financial Situations of NGOs (Unit : One Thousand Won)

Contents		Citizen's Coalition for Economic Justice (Average of Jan.-Aug.)	People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (Sep.)	Korean Federation for Environmental Movement (Oct.)
NGOs				
Income	Regular Donations	8,317	33,512	50,281
	Supporting Donations	26,111	119	304
	Project	36,779	11,500	11,840
	Others	3,398	709	51,782
	Total Income	74,605	45,840	114,207
Expenditure	Labor Force	35,572	21,393	32,286
	Administrative	14,782	10,988	57,376
	Activities	16,928	6,987	10,188
	Others	1,116	5,768	
	Total Expenditure	68,398	45,136	99,850

Source : Mun-Wha Ilbo, 24 November 1999.

But there are some problems as follows.

It is a question whether the NGOs receiving financial support from the government or business companies can be really neutral and justified in monitoring the state power and bureaucratic corruption. So the NGOs with the governmental finance are in a dilemma to independently monitor the government.

The financial support from the government is restricted to the budget for NGOs' own

activities, but can the NGOs really follow the rules? If the support is not for labor force or general administration, they will lose their scope of power. As a result, the governmental support can be interpreted as a way of controlling the NGOs.

Third, the biggest criticism against the Korean NGOs these days is that they are civil organizations without citizens. Civil organizations without citizens discourage any interest or participation of citizens and bring about other problems. One of the NGO workers said it is because they concentrated only on the growth strategies in the early stages. Another reason is that they depend more on expert groups such as lawyers or professors than on ordinary citizens. Last but not least is that the Korean NGOs paid too much attention on political fighting, sticking to bureaucratic operation. In other words, Korean NGOs form power system centered on the establisher and so they tend to continue bureaucracy as their operation method. So the NGOs will remain the same without citizens unless they have a comprehensive attitude with a flexible mind and liberal administration. As far as such a problem is concerned a president of an NGO criticized NGOs are now becoming another power group and if they fail to change the trend, they will fall as nothing but a group of a few experts.

Fourth, the aims of the Korean NGOs are unclear. Civil society should have a clearly defined ideology and goals, but they don't. That is why they were not able to lead any specific or professional civil movement and instead, they simply maintained all-round player' style. So they couldn't deal with social issues respectively. This shows that the NGOs need to be specialized so that they can attain any particular group of citizens. There should be any kind of public discussion about the problems of the Korean NGOs such as a lack of professionalism, neutrality, finances and citizen members. In reality, even such a discussion is inappropriate because only the NGOs themselves get all the attention. In need of substantial social democratization, the following measures can be taken to solve the problems.

First, there should be an open area of civil society, which is of citizens, for citizens and by citizens. Namely the public participation of ordinary citizens is urgently needed instead of a few well-known experts.

Second, the civil society should be able to play as a mediator between the government and the citizens. So the NGOs must be able to find out and analyze citizens interests and offer an agenda for the government.

Third, in order to keep the neutrality non-profit organizations(NPO) should be created other than the NGOs. They should make every effort for financial independence to have autonomy. Even a sense of business management is needed.

Fourth, the Korean NGOs should open their eyes much wider so that they may consolidate international cooperation with the rest of the world to face the common issues of the global village.

Roles of NGOs to Prevent Bureaucratic Corruption

Recently Korea has become stained with too many corruption scandals from the power corruption such as dress lobbying incidence to minor bribery by low ranking civil servants. In fact the bribery in the public sector is like a monster which can threaten the democratic process and national development. It is a serious crime causing all the people's suffering trouble. Anti-corruption in bureaucracy can succeed only with systematic and integrated strategies after finding out and analyzing its causes. Now a new approach relevant to this age is needed than ever before. Most of all, we need to find out the causes of corruption. For example, the corruption can be derived from the flaws of laws or social institutions, organizations or their management skills, and unexpected side effects. High officials or bureaucrats in developing countries in particular are many times so far away from the reality and too formal. Civil servants cause much opportunity of corruption by use of maneuver interpreting regulations and laws to their favor. All the irregularities in public administration are also possible because the civil servants do not perform their duties on the basis of proper regulations. At the same time such corruption problems are contributed also to the prevalent bribery or lobby manner in the Korean society, not only to the civil servants' behaviors. The dominant perception of our society that money is everything is the ultimate problem. Likewise the causes and the facts of corruption must be clearly detected and on its basis we should provide for controlling strategies for anti-corruption. Modern capitalistic society has brought us a remarkable development and confidence in the social system itself with the help of market. But it also left us a problem of materialization. Isolation in the process of production has removed us of humanity and morals, and so, with reification all the society has become dominated by the mammonism. Such a mammonism has already taken a deep root in the public sector and through the acts of bribery it even causes the rent-seeking activity. Bureaucratic irregularities and corruption, for example, the prevalent bribery in the Korean society are now requiring us to prepare for new ethics and morals for public administration. Timely enough, the OECD initiated the AntiCorruption Round last year to prevent corruption and Transparency International (TI) located in Berlin pointed out Korean corruption index as the 50th among 99 countries. The issue of corruption is now treated in the international level as well as in the domestic level and can have a critical effect on the international economic relations. Thus, anti-corruption is an inevitable task for us to survive in the age of globalization. The IMF crisis, which led us into the disastrous chaos, was also due to the bureaucratic corruption and linkage of politics & economy. This enormous corruption in Korea cannot be overcome only by the institution or one-time punishment, and therefore, the new roles of civil organizations and NGOs are seriously needed.

New millennium is the age of NGOs and the global civil society will be growing much

more. Local community building comes as an important development strategy. Greenpeace, global NGO for environment, came through to help the local activists who were against building a power station near the East Sea. Another global NGO called Medecin Sans Frontieres (MSF) was in North Korea to provide medical relief for North Korean people. In the global civil society, the NGOs are now playing tremendously important roles and reaching all over the global village. (Joo Sung-Soo, 1998)

In fact, the IMF crisis in Korea was overcome with a lot of help of civil society its creativity and crisis management. Korean society these days, however, is covered with chaos and confusion of isolated political groups' corruption. Group selfishness, local discrimination and diploma-orientedness are so common in Korean society. Korean public administration, thus, needs to react to social changes and the development administration is central in the process. The development administration, sometimes as an independent variable and sometimes as an intervening or dependent variable, is required for desirable future goals. Especially the overgrowing public administration in this age tends to cause corruption. (Han Young-Hwan 1988 : p. 67) This is where the civil society and the NGOs have reasons to wield activities to control state power. Then what would be alternative solutions for anti-corruption in the civil society ?

First, participatory democracy should expand for the civil organizations to achieve more opportunities. Democratization has developed the civil society, and the characteristics of the modern society such as pluralism, overproduction, and overconsumption have revealed many common problems not confined to any particular social class. That is how the civil movement appeared different from the traditional demonstration. If people focus on a social class, the civil movement goes for non-class, and the local community people participate to change the civil movement. Such characteristics of the NGOs enhanced individualism of the ordinary citizens to the level of our common social spirit. In the new millennium the Korean society will experience much more diverse social diverse and with such a trend of pluralism and civilization, the importance of the NGOs will grow on and on. It is because of the civil participatory democracy that the NGOs can do their roles to prevent corruption.

Second, the modern civil society must get rid of all the evil habits of national administration and the officials, and with necessary professionalism, serve as a monitor. Due to the officials' easy-going attitudes the big amount of tax leaks every year. The officials, however, still do not take the responsibility and neglect the responses from the civil society. In order for any civil organizations to control such a problem they must secure their own professionalism. To guarantee the citizens' participation to prevent corruption we must promote the education to embody civil movement. Such an education will include budget watch, civil inspection and access to information so that a system may be established for the citizens to monitor.

Third, we must use the system of prosecution. The problem is the over-generosity

in our society not to reveal the corruption in spite of its obviousness. It is very difficult to let known the colleagues' corruption in the Korean public administration. That is why the NGOs need to activate their roles of monitoring.

Fourth, each and every member of the NGOs must have a firmly established sense of moral and social reform. They must have a determined resolution that anti-corruption is imperative in the Korean history. If anyone of the NGO workers dare to do the civil movement for his or her social success, the anti-corruption roles of the NGOs will fall to the danger of individual ambition.

Conclusion

In the 21st century the activities of the civil organizations will be much more strengthened, and especially for transparency in public administration their importance will be highlighted. We must renew our social mind and nationwide support in order for the NGOs to fight against the bureaucratic corruption with transparency and justice. Some officials seeking for private interests are lack of common good sense, and so they encourage corruption. This is not just because of the civil servants' problems but also because of absence of mature civil culture. Korean NGOs must make each and every effort to serve as such a monitor and modifier. In conclusion, to get rid of corruption, we need an ethical recovery of all the people from the governors, politicians, and officials to ordinary citizens. Civil movement against corruption is needed. Although the regulations and the system may be perfect, the civil movement cannot succeed without the resolute will of the officials in charge. In the new millennium the countries which succeed in reforming regulations and preventing corruption will emerge as leading countries in Asia. Without the success of anticorruption there will be neither competitive business companies nor national development. In the future the globalization will still go on in the international economy and the transparency will be a key factor of success both in economy and in public administration. So the traditional linkage between politics and economy may lead to national bankruptcy and no more national development. Thus, this research paper focused on the importance of civil society as a monitor against corruption and is sure that Korean NGOs will play a central role in the national development in the 21st century.

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