

The Changes and their Implications in Central-Local Government Relations Since the 1995 Local Election: The Case of South Korea

韓國의 1995年 地方選舉 以後 中央-地方間 關係變化와 含意

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<ABSTRACT>

The 1995 local election indicated a turning point in South Korea. It reflected a fundamental transition from an over-centralized state to a decentralized one. Since then, full-fledged local autonomy set sail with the newly elected 245 chiefs and thousands of local councillors of large and small local governments.

Two years have passed under what is called new age of local autonomy. As the concentrated political power begins to devolve, vivid changes have been taking place in central-local relations as well as within local governments, often creating undesirable side-effects. This paper addresses the changing relations between central

and local governments in terms of vital aspects of decentralization such as structure, function and finance. An effort was also made to draw practical as well as theoretical implications from a decentralization experiment in South Korea.

There have been two contending models concerning how big a local government should be: they are the public choice model and the area-wide reform model. These two models greatly help Korean citizens and their policy-makers decide how big local governments should be and design the appropriate governmental structure in metropolitan areas. The recent proposal by the Ministry of Interior to eliminate the district councils in the six largest cities, however, seems to take the position of reform model. It could weaken the function of the district governments which are the lower-tier units to the metropolitan-wide governments.

Many critical local services are not included in the functional inventory of South Korean local governments. For instance, the city government doesn't have any right and responsibility for crime control, fire prevention and traffic regulation which are essential for managing the city. Thus local governments demands that many functions carried out by the central government should be handed over to them. The bureaucrats in the central government, however, are strongly against devolving the governmental functions to local governments for fear of losing their power. They tend to presume the redistribution of governmental functions as a power game.

The weak fiscal capacity of local governments has not been improved much since the 1995 local election. The newly elected local leaders attempted to figure out how to expand the sources of local revenue in vain. The central government was particularly reluctant in implementing the financial decentralization. Many proposals to change the current tax assignment system, for instance, have not been accepted.

It could be said that local autonomy is more than an elected local government, but a way of life based on a set of values that constitutes a political culture. Those values, which are essential for self-governance and democracy, must be cultivated by providing institutional and procedural frameworks for political participation. Therefore, the recent experiences in local autonomy will certainly contribute to germinate a set of values which are essential to create a new political culture of self-governance in South Korea.

I. Introduction

On March 4, 1994, the ruling and opposition law-makers in South Korea passed very important political reform bills through the National Assembly special session. This parliamentary approval was a historic event in the long journey toward a full democratization of Korean society. The new political reform laws, dealing with elections, political funds and the local autonomy system, were aimed at securing clean politics by sharply reducing the cost of election campaigning, making political funds transparent and revitalizing the principle of local self-governance. "The passage of the reform bills established a foothold to usher in a new era of politics," said an elated Assembly member emerging from the vote.⁶⁷⁾

Among the reform bills, the revised Local Autonomy Law laid the legal basis to reorganize much of the local units which included a consolidation of cities and their surrounding counties to create an integrated urban-rural units. And it particularly stipulated that the local election would be held next year. In conformity with the Law, the comprehensive local election was held on June 27, 1995 for the first time since 1961. All four types of local election were held simultaneously to reduce the cost of elections: the four included the second-time election of local council members⁶⁸⁾ and the first-time election of local chief executives at both first and second tier of local units.

The 1995 local election indicates a turning point in South Korea. It reflects a fundamental transition from an over-centralized state to a decentralized one. Since then, full-fledged local autonomy set sail with the newly elected 245 chiefs and thousands of local councillors of large and small local governments. Especially the chiefs of local unit were elected through popular vote instead of being appointed by the President for the first time in 34 years.

Two years have passed under what is called new age of local autonomy. As the concentrated political power begins to devolve, vivid changes have been taking place in central-local relations as well as within local governments, often creating undesirable

67) Korea Herald, March 5, 1994, p.1.

68) In 1991, the election of local councillors was first held in 30 years since the local councils were disbanded by the military junta in 1961.

side-effects(Lee, 1996: 131). This paper addresses the changing relations between central and local governments in terms of vital aspects of decentralization such as structure, function and finance. An effort will also be made to draw practical as well as theoretical implications from a decentralization experiment in South Korea.

II. Local Autonomy in South Korea⁶⁹⁾

1. The politics of the vortex

Centralization has tended to be both the norm and ideal in achieving a national development in many of the developing countries. Centralized economic planning, intervention and control have been viewed by the national government as the correct path to follow(Rondinelli et al., 1984: 1). Korea was not the exception in this respect. Rather, Korean government has been extremely centralized. Two crucial differences in the politics of Korea were related to the degree of centralization of power and the degree of authority consciousness and dependency on the masses of the people(Wright, 1975: 4). As Henderson once put it, "the physics of Korean political dynamics appears to resemble a strong vortex tending to sweep all active elements of the society upward towards central power"(Henderson, 1968: 5).

In such a highly centralized system, all decisions were made by the President as a single actor located at one point, who would have to be omniscient and infallible. The weakness of such centralized system was large and serious. Its liabilities included overload and congestion of communication channels, resulting in long delays and general breakdown of the system(Kochen and Deutsch, 1980: 16-17). Moreover, the central government could not know the complex variety of factors that affected the success of programmes and projects in local communities throughout the country.

69) The concept of local autonomy is used here in the context of national-local government relationships. It refers to a community that is within the boundaries of a nation, legally part of that nation, but which has a substantial amount of independence from it. Consequently, the term "relative local autonomy" could be more appropriate(Warren, 1993: 283).

South Korea provides a prime example of a centralized governing system where public decision-making could be quickly done and efficiently implemented, but there has always been the danger that such a procedural efficiency could result in arbitrarily and incautiously planned public policy.

2. Historical Progress of Local Autonomy

The South Korean history of local self-governance goes back to 1949 when a Local Autonomy Law was first promulgated in July. But the local autonomy system was not put into reality until 1952 because of the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. The first local election since the founding of the Republic was held in 1952 to elect members of the city, county, and township councils. Under a two-tier system provided for in the law, mayors of special cities and governors of provinces were appointed by the President while mayors of cities and chiefs of counties and townships were elected by the respective local councils. The law was revised in 1956 to stipulate that the heads of local autonomous bodies except special cities and provinces should be elected by the people in direct votes instead of by local councils. The first direct election of the heads of local bodies was held on August 8, 1956.

Following the student uprising in 1960 that toppled down the Syngman Ree's government, the Local Autonomy Law was revised drastically to realize local self-governance to a full extent. One of the notable features in the revision was to elect mayors of special cities and governors of provinces by direct, popular vote. In the nation-wide elections held in December 1960, all the heads of local autonomous bodies including special cities and provinces and members of local councils were elected by universal, direct, and secret votes. This brief period under the control of the Democratic Party is called the golden age of local self-governance in South Korea. The military take-over on May 16, 1961, however, frustrated this dashing hope of a new era of local self-governance. Since then, all the local councils were disbanded and heads of local autonomous bodies were named by the central government.

The Third Republic since 1963 virtually closed the door for local autonomy by stipulating in the Constitution that no local assembly shall be established until the

nation becomes unified again. No single local election has been held since 1961 and local governing functions have been performed by the Minister of Interior and the appointed provincial governors.

The Fifth Republic since 1981 adopted the indigenation of democracy as a national goal. The revival of local autonomy was also promised by the Constitution. The Article 119 stipulated that: (1) legislative bodies shall be established for local governments; (2) the organization and power of local assemblies, the election of the assembly members, the selection of the chief executive of the local governments, and other matters relating to the organization and administration of local governments shall be determined by laws. The revival of local autonomy was, however, delayed under the pretext of weak local financial base. The Article 10 of the supplementary provision stipulated that local councils shall be established on an incremental basis, taking into account the degree of local financial self-sufficiency.

During the decade between mid-1980s and mid-1990s, there had been a series of tug-of-war among the various segments of society who had different views on the system of local self-governance.⁷⁰⁾ After many twists and turns, the seventh amendment of Local Autonomy Law was finally passed in 1988. It stipulated that the lower-tier local council should be organized by 1989 and the upper-tier one should be organized not later than two years from that year. The government, however, could not keep the mandate of the amendment.

In 1991, the election of local council members was eventually held in 30 years since the local councils were disbanded by the military coup in 1961. But only the council election was carried out at this time. The national political actors, irrespective of their party affiliation, implicitly agreed on not having an election for the heads of local government.

During the presidential campaign in 1992, all candidates pledged themselves to

70) The majority of political actors, who spoke out local autonomy in public, were not truly welcoming it. They really worried that the newly emerging group of local elites will weaken their power base. They were worried about losing the vested interest which were able to be realized through the system of centralization rather than decentralized local self-governance system. This was true in the case of opposition party as well as in the ruling party(Lee, 1996: 134-35).

establish full-fledged local autonomy. Just before the local election date, June 27, 1995 which was set by the Law, some politicians especially in the ruling party tried to delay the local election once again. But they could not go against the stream of the times.

3. Present Structure of Local Autonomy

The current Constitution in South Korea states in the Article 117 that local governments shall deal with the matters pertaining to the welfare of local residents, manage properties, and may enact rules and regulations regarding local autonomy within the limit of laws and decrees. Also, the Article 118 stipulates that local councils shall be established in local governments.

It is prescribed in the Local Autonomy Law that the purpose of it is to strive for both democracy and efficiency of local autonomous administration and to achieve a balanced development of local communities and democratic development of the Republic by regulating the matters concerning types, organization and operation of local governments and the basic relationships between the State and them.

The structure of local government is hierarchical, with the central government at the top. All local governments are principally under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior. It is one of the most powerful bureaucratic organizations in the central government. Indeed, it has been "the central supervising organ" for the organization and function of the nation's local government machinery(Ahn and Kim, 1987: 40).

The hierarchy of local government consists of two-tiers of local autonomous units: the intermediate unit and the basic unit. As an upper tier of local units, the former refers to the area-wide governments: it includes 1 special city(Seoul), 5 metropolitan cities(Busan, Daegu, Incheon, Kwangju and Daejon) and 9 provincial governments. The latter is a lower tier of local governments: it includes 67 city governments(Si), 98 county governments(Gun) and 65 district governments(Gu). Besides, as an administrative local unit, there are 193 town governments(Eup) and 1,241 village governments(Myeon). There are also 2,324 urban neighborhoods(Dong).

III. 1995 Comprehensive Local Election

The local election in June 27, 1995 gave a humiliating defeat to the then ruling Democratic Liberal Party(DLP) and President Kim.⁷¹⁾ The opposition Democratic Party(DP) and United Liberal Democrats(ULD) and independents together won 10 out of the 15 races for the mayors and provincial governors at the upper local unit. They also took 160 out of the 230 seats for the mayors and chiefs at the lower local unit.

In Seoul, the mayoral race was won by Cho Soon who was nominated by the opposition DP.⁷²⁾ The 23 seats out of total 25 for the district chiefs in Seoul was also taken by the DP. Political pundits dubbed that situation the birth of "Seoul Republic", as the megapolis was completely controlled by the opposition party.

In fact, the '6.27' local election was an another national election. Old-fashioned regional rivalry raised their ugly head once again. The election split the nation into three politically opposing regions: Cholla province(Southwest), Kyongsang province(Southeast) and Chungchong province(Middle region). The issues having little to do with local election, such as a generational shift in political leadership and a constitutional revision to parliamentary government system, dominated the 16-day campaign. Although the ruling camp wanted to switch the interests of the voters toward local issues and affairs of living, the national politics were main matters of concern in the campaign. Local politics had been nationalized. People tended to adopt the retrospective voting: they tried to evaluate the past performance of the ruling camp through the local election(Lee, 1996: 140-41).

The real significance of '6.27' local election, however, was that full-fledged local

71) In a rare show of humility, President Kim Young-Sam acknowledged the defeat the ruling party suffered in the local election. In a breakfast meeting with all law-makers of the DLP, Kim said, "We should humbly accept the election results, which are the clear expression of the will of the people and heaven."(Korea Times, July 6, 1995, p.2).

72) Mayor Cho, who was elected in the first popular vote in 34 years, declared just after his inauguration that he will allow no interest that will either impede his independence or jeopardize his duties as the mayor. He said, "It's the Democratic Party who nominated me, but it's Seoul citizen who elected me. I think I am obligated to the citizen first.. My status as mayor is more important than party affiliation"(Korea Times, July 15, 1995, p.1).

autonomy set sail with 245 newly elected heads of local government and thousands of local councillors. The era of decentralization began to start in 34 years since the system of local self-governance was abolished by the military government in 1961. In their inauguration speeches, the local chiefs elected through popular vote instead of being appointed by the President, vowed to open a new age of local autonomy and regional development.⁷³⁾

IV. The Changes and their Implications in Intergovernmental Relations

The central-local government relationships involve various dimensions of decentralization: constitutional provision, jurisdictional setting, functional responsibility, financial resources, types of central control and so on. The focus in this paper will be placed upon three vital aspects of it including structural problem, functional assignment and financial allocation. Besides, as a negative side-effect, conflicts and disputes among different levels of government will be analyzed.

1. Structural change

One of the basic problems in institutionalizing the principle of local autonomy is related to the number and size of local government units. What are the appropriate units and types of local government for self-governance?

A controversy over restructuring local government units has been continuing in the political circle. In the existing three-tiered structure of local government,⁷⁴⁾ the six

73) Lee Eui-Keun, new governor of Kyongsangpukto province, said in his inaugural speech that he will exert every effort to become a governor who is loved and trusted by provincial residents. New governor of Kyonggi province, Lee In-Je, asked for cooperation from city mayors and county chiefs in his province for regional development. Cheju governor, Shin Koo-Bum, declared the "Cheju Corporation", pledging that he will open an era of a "10 billion dollar Cheju economy"(Korea Times, July 3, 1995, p.2).

74) Three tiers include two tiers of local autonomous unit(the upper unit and the lower one) and one tier of administrative unit.

largest cities and nine provinces stand on top, followed by smaller cities, counties and districts in larger cities in the middle, with the lowest administrative units of towns(Eup), villages(Myeon) and urban neighborhoods(Dong) at the bottom.

Earlier in 1995, the then ruling party(DLP) considered the change by cutting administrative corners and rezoning jurisdictional boundaries, based on its own judgment that the current three-tiered structure of local units was too complicated to meet the people's ever-increasing administrative demands promptly and that the upper units of local government needed to be rezoned to dilute regional antagonism.

The DLP attempted to revamp local units before the June 27 local election but failed in the face of charges from the opposition camp that the ruling camp's real intention to delay the holding of the local election was cloaked within. It was also proposed that top-level local units such as the largest cities and provinces must be rezoned over the long-term to uproot the regional rivalry. "Including dividing Seoul into four sections, the idea of regrouping the existing 15 largest cities and provinces into 40 to 50 large cities and counties can be studied", a ranking party official said on a condition of a anonymity.⁷⁵⁾

Recently, the Ministry of Interior reportedly plans to get cities and counties to absorb the functions of Eup, Myeon and Dong on a short-term basis. Under a world-wide trend of widening administrative units, they argue, it is necessary to reduce the current three-tiered administrative structure to the two-tiered one by abolishing the smallest administrative units. They also seem to consider an idea of eliminating the district councils in the six largest cities for effective administration and cooperation between them.⁷⁶⁾

The smallest units of local government, such as towns(Eup), villages(Myeon) and neighborhoods(Dong), are excluded from the status of local government eligible for self-governance under the current legal provisions. Towns and villages, however, are long-established jurisdictions and the most basic units of local government. Especially, a village is a natural community in rural area with which emotional identification of belongingness is made. Villages are a true grass-roots government, naturally fit for

75) Korea Times, July 27, 1995.

76) Dong-A Daily, June 28, 1997.

self-governance(Cho, 1983: 336-37). Therefore, it could be a mistake to get rid of these basic units for local self-governance merely based on a criterion of administrative efficiency.

Another issue is concerned with the size of local governments in a metropolitan area. The population of six largest cities such as Seoul, Busan, Daegu, Incheon, Kwangju and Daejeon ranges from one million to twelve million. Are these mega-cities suitable for a meaningful self-governance?

There have been two contending models concerning how big a local government should be. They are the public choice model and the area-wide reform model(Pae, 1986: 133-39). The former supports a polycentric political system: it recommends fragmentation of as many functional local self-governments and creation of as many special local governments. It argues that such a polycentric system can exhibit a high degree of interaction and self-regulation through various formal and informal mechanisms and adaptations which are used to internalize extra-local positive and negative externalities within the region without recourse to a central point of control(Warren, 1993: 305). The latter calls for a centralized governing system with boundaries that fit the metropolitan region. It argues that because of the interdependence of many urban problems across small local governments, a metropolitan area-wide larger system of governance is better than too many small fragmented local governments.

These two models will greatly help Korean citizens and their policy-makers decide how big local governments should be and design the appropriate governmental structure for metropolitan areas. The recent proposal by the Ministry to eliminate the district councils in the six largest cities, however, seems to take the position of reform model. It could weaken the function of the district governments which are the lower-tier units to the metropolitan-wide governments.⁷⁷⁾

77) In Seoul, for instance, there are 25 district governments(Gu) under the Seoul metropolitan government.

2. Functional assignment

The administrative function handled by local governments basically consists of two types of services: the purely local affairs by its nature and the delegated tasks which are undertaken on behalf of the central government.⁷⁸⁾ The latter is again divided into two kinds: those delegated by central agencies to the head of localities(what is called 'nationally delegated functions') and those entrusted to the local units as a corporate entity(what is called 'corporately delegated functions').

As the pure local services for which local governments have a full managerial discretion, the Local Autonomy Law illustrates by example such as welfare promotion, industrial development, environmental management, education, art and culture and so on. These matters are again distributed between the upper-tier and the lower-tier local units. Moreover, the Law restricts severely local governments from dealing with the state affairs such as diplomacy, defense, judiciary, taxation, finance, import and export and so on.

In 1994, the Ministry of Government Administration published a policy report concerning the functional distribution between central and local governments. Among the total 15,774 units of administrative task prescribed in the rules and regulations, the number of the state affairs handled solely by central government were 11,744(75%) whereas the pure local services occupied merely 13%(2,110 units) of total governmental tasks. The remaining 1,920(12%) tasks were delegated to the local governments by national government.

<Distribution of Administrative Functions>

Total Units	Year	State Affairs	Delegated Functions	Local Services
15,774 (100%)	1994	11,744(75%)	1,920(12%)	2,110(13%)
	1996	11,646(74%)	1,246(8%)	2,882(18%)

<source: Ministry of Government Administration, 1997>

78) The current Local Autonomy Law stipulates in the Article 9 that local governments shall manage their autonomous activities within their jurisdiction and manage the affairs entrusted to them under laws and regulations.

Even after the local election was held in 1995, the functional distribution between central and local governments has not been changed very much. The proportion of local services has been increased only by 5%. It was caused by both 1% decrease in the state-controlled affairs and 4% decrease in the delegated functions.

There is no specific list of functions that localities must have. The mix of services local governments control will vary from nation to nation, locality to locality, and over time as the socio-economic and political environment and technology change. Nevertheless, there must be some locally-controlled services that include law enforcement, land use control, housing, education, transportation, recreation, art and culture, water and sewerage, etc. (Warren, 1993: 291-92).

However, these critical local services are not included in the functional inventory of South Korean local governments. For instance, the city government doesn't have any right and responsibility for crime control, fire prevention and traffic regulation which are essential for managing the city. Thus local governments demands that many functions carried out by the central government should be handed over to them. But the central government argues that they are not ready for delivering those services yet.

The bureaucrats in the central government are strongly against devolving the governmental functions to local governments for fear of losing their power. They tend to presume the redistribution of governmental functions as a power game (Lee, 1996: 148).

3. Financial allocation

The institutionalization of the concept of local self-governance is particularly contingent upon local fiscal capacity. If the local autonomy is to exist in reality, local governments should have an authority to utilize, by their own decisions, a wide variety of revenue sources. Besides, the central government needs to provide the financial helps which are essential for assisting the weak localities and equalizing the differences among regions.

The local government finance in South Korea mainly consists of two sources of local revenues: tax revenues and non-tax ones. In addition to these own-source revenues,

there are three different types of intergovernmental transfers: local transfer tax,⁷⁹⁾ revenue sharing⁸⁰⁾ and grants-in-aid.

From 1976 to 1993, the financial self-sufficiency level⁸¹⁾ of local government had not been improved much: the nation-wide average rate was changed from 42.5% in 1976 to 63.9% in 1993. What happened was that local governments depended heavily on the financial aids from central government. Nearly all local governments, especially rural governments(provinces and counties), were financially weak and politically vulnerable to the influence of central government. Only the special city government(Seoul) was not dependent financially on the national government(Yoo, 1993: 156-57).

In 1993, the average nation-wide rate of local financial self-sufficiency was 63.9%. In contrast with Seoul and five metropolitan cities whose rate was more than 80%, the average self-sufficiency rate of counties was only 24.5% while the average rate of cities was 63.6%.

As of 1994, the total local revenues(in general account) amounted to 18,904 billion won. Among them, the tax revenues and non-tax revenues occupied 52% and 16%, respectively. On the other hand, the local governments depended 30% of their revenues upon the aids from the central government.

<local government finance>

(unit: billion won, %)

Revenues		Expenditures	
Tax revenues	9,924(52)	Regional development	4,623(25)
Non-tax revenues	2,935(16)	Social welfare	3,058(16)
Intergovernmental transfers	5,693(30)	Industrial economy	2,331(12)
Borrowing	352(2)	General administration	7,167(38)
Total Revenues	18,904(100)	Total Expenditures	18,904(100)

<source: Ministry of Interior, 1994>

The weak fiscal capacity of local governments has not been improved much since the

79) Introduced in 1991, it allocates the ear-marked portion of some national taxes to the local governments on the ground of a simple formula. It amounted to 1,470 billion won in 1993.

80) By law, its amount is fixed to 13.27% of the national domestic taxes.

81) The ratio of local own-source revenues to total local revenues.

1995 local election. The newly elected local leaders attempted to figure out how to expand the sources of local revenue in vain. The central government was particularly reluctant in implementing the financial decentralization. Many proposals to change the current tax assignment system,⁸²⁾ for instance, have not been accepted.

Three areas of local financing need to be changed in promoting the fiscal base of local governments: they are tax assignment, intergovernmental transfer and non-tax revenues. In assigning the taxes, it is necessary to simplify the local taxes into the smaller number of high-yielding ones and to give more emphasis on the property tax. Among the three types of intergovernmental transfers, the revenue sharing is better than the grants-in-aid in fostering local autonomy and partnership among different levels of government. The user-charges are the most promising source for expanding the local revenues. Thus it is needed to use the user-charges more extensively and increase the rate of charge to reflect the true service costs.(Kim, 1993: 416-18).

4. Negative side-effects

As the heads of local government are elected popularly, not appointed as before, disputes between central and local governments as well as among local governments are bound to rise. No magistrates of local administration would give in to higher offices. Rather, they are more aggressive in the protection of the local interests they represent, thus widening the arena for conflicts between local governments. Feuding is not confined to the horizontal relations among local administrations. It is also present and increasing in number between local and central government.

In almost a year after the 1995 local election, there have been 93 cases of conflict between government and people as well as among different levels of government. Among them, 31 cases have happened between central and local governments, while 27 cases were among the local governments each other. The remaining 35 disputes were happened in the relationships between local residents and government(Korea Research Institute for Local Administration, 1996: 4).

82) The national tax mainly consists of income and sales related taxes, while the local tax is based on land and property taxes.

<Types and Numbers of Disputes>

1. Between central and local government	31
○ central gov't vs. upper-tier local units	15
○ central gov't vs. lower-tier local units	16
2. Among local governments	27
○ among the upper-tier units	4
○ upper-tier vs. lower-tier units	18
○ among the lower-tier units	5
3. With the local residents	35
○ between central gov't and residents	7
○ between local gov't and residents	25
○ among residents th	3
TOTAL	93

The government is now planning to legislate a law to lay the legal foundation for the central government to mediate conflicting interests among local governments for peaceful settlement. Under the planned move, a mediation committee will be set up under the Prime Minister's Office to intervene in the disputes between the warring sides. If no peaceful settlement can be reached, administrative suits can be filed under the conceived law.

It is not good enough, however, to depend merely on the legal solution over conflicts. The top-down approach which was effective during the age of centralization needs to be avoided especially in resolving the quarrels between central and local governments. When the national government seeks to develop major projects like a concentrated zone of heavy industry or a nuclear energy facility, an alternative must be found to unilateral action. Ad hoc mechanisms configured to fit specific cases, for instance, can be created to make possible the participation of representatives of local governments and citizen advocacy groups in the project assessment, site selection, design of facility and even long-term management and planning decision processes. These non-hierarchical structures could allow all interested and affected governmental and non-governmental parties to jointly negotiate the parameters and probable distribution of risk for the environment, communities and human-beings(Warren, 1993: 310-11).

V. Concluding Remarks: Prospects for Local Autonomy

This paper has reviewed the changes which were happened after the 1995 local election in terms of the intergovernmental relations and drawn some implications from them. It is certain that the issues of local governing structure, functional distribution and fiscal matters are important for introducing the concept of local self-governance. But they may not be good enough.

It can be said that local autonomy is more than an elected local government, but a way of life based on a set of values that constitutes a political culture. That is, in addition to being limited by their Constitutions and laws, local governments are also limited by their citizens' attitudes, beliefs and expectations about what government should do, who should participate and what rules should govern the political games.⁸³⁾ <17> Some political cultures may place very strict limits on what local governments can do, while other cultures may allow their local governments to enjoy considerable freedom(Harrigan, 1980: 32-33).

There have been lots of theories concerning the political culture in South Korea. Among them, the centralizing characteristics of Korean political culture was represented by Yoon's thesis of authoritarian culture(Yoon, 1961) and Henderson's argument about the politics of the vortex(Henderson, 1968). They were depicting the Korean's traditional authoritarianism and a centripetal tendency toward political power.

Thus, in South Korean society, it was somewhat difficult to nurture such a set of values underlying a democratic political culture as citizenship, public interest, compromise, and so on. To take an example, in Korean tradition and culture, a compromise has been deemed undesirable. A person who compromised was an unprincipled person and therefore unworthy of respect, not a gentleman. This belief is certainly detrimental to the democratic process of self-government. The willingness to compromises is an agent to grease the machinery of democratic self-governance since the difference of opinions among citizens and policy-makers can be resolved through a

83) As Robert Warren pointed out, the functional and fiscal elements are the formal conditions for relative local autonomy to exist. They are necessary, but not sufficient. There are another informal conditions for ensuring relative local autonomy, such as citizenship, private and third sector and so on(Warren, 1993).

compromise.

However, these values, attitudes and beliefs, which are essential for self-governance and democracy, can and must be cultivated by providing institutional and procedural frameworks for political participation and encouraging people to accept the role of citizens as an integral part of their daily life. Repetitive, evaluative, and cumulative experiences in the processes are expected to form a new set of standards for conduct. Therefore, the recent experiences in local autonomy will certainly contribute to germinate a set of values which are essential to create a new political culture of self-governance in South Korea.

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