

Decentralization and Local Self-Government in South Korea : Some Critical Issues to be Considered

Ik - Sik Kim

(Research Fellow, Korea Local
Administration Institute)

< TABLE OF CONTENTS >

- I. Introduction
- II. Purpose of Study
- III. Politics of Decentralization
 - 1. Nature and Concepts
 - 2. Types
 - 3. Advantages
- IV. Local Autonomy System in South Korea
 - 1. Historical Background
 - 2. Institutional Issues
 - (1) How Much Decentralization?
 - (2) Functional Assignment
 - (3) Local Government Units
 - 3. Political Culture
 - 4. Fiscal Self - Sufficiency
- V. Summary and Conclusion
- Bibliography

I. Introduction

Generally, centralization has tended to be both the norm and ideal that pervades con-

cepts of political, economic, and administrative organization in the developing countries.

Centralized economic planning, intervention, and control have been viewed by national government authorities as the correct path to follow.¹⁾

Korea is not the exception in this respect. Korean government has been highly centralized. Two crucial differences in the politics of Korea and many Western nations are related to (1) the degree of centralization of power and (2) the degree of authority consciousness and dependency on the part of the masses of the people.²⁾

1) Dennis A. Rondinelli et al., Decentralization in Developing Countries: A Review of Recent Experience, World Bank Staff Working Papers No. 581 (Washington, D.C. : World Bank, 1984), p.1.

2) Edward R. Wright, ed., Korean Politics in Transition (Seattle and London : University of Washington Press, 1975), p.4.

The roots of Korean centralism are ancient and strong. Traditionally, every headquarters and every ambitions man must be in the capital, Seoul. Not being seen in Seoul acquired tones of disfavor. To live in the provinces meant disgrace. Through the long, consistent march of such developments, Korea became as centralized as it is possible to imagine a modern culture to be.³⁾

In such a highly centralized system, all decisions and services are made and performed by a single, compact actor-as-an-individual located at one central point.⁴⁾ For perfect service, maximum centralization thus would require an actor who ideally would have to be omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, inexhaustible, and infallible.

The weakness of such extremely centralized systems; however, most often are larger and more serious. Their liabilities include overload and congestion of their communication channels and facilities, with resulting long delays or partial/general breakdowns of the system. Some frequently used methods of coping with overload are them-

selves sources of further liabilities, such as the growth of long waiting lines, frequent errors, and the chunking or stereotyping of more or less diverse cases into a few categories that are often likely to prove inappropriate.⁵⁾

Moreover, central administrators cannot know the complex variety of factors that affect the success of projects in local communities throughout the country. In their attempt to cope with this uncertainty, they create highly centralized and standardized procedures or through fear of making mistakes, they do nothing about urgent decisions that are essential for implementing local projects and programs.⁶⁾

The Korean situation provides a prime example of a centralized political structure where public decision-making can be quickly done and efficiently implemented, but there is always the danger that procedural efficiency can result in arbitrarily and incautiously planned public policy.

II. Purpose of Study

As a system of government, local self-governance seeks to achieve two general objectives: (1) politically, to make government more democratic and (2) administratively, to meet the distinct public

3) Gregory Henderson, Korea: The politics of the Vortex (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), p.199.

4) Manfred Kochen and Karl W. Deutsch, Decentralization: Sketches Toward a Rational Theory (Cambridge, Mass.: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, Publishers, Inc., 1980), p.16.

5) Ibid., pp.16-17.

6) Dennis A. Rondinelli et al., op. cit., p.3

service needs of communities.⁷⁾

First of all, it will improve government's responsiveness to the public and increase the quantity and quality of the service it provides. Greater participation in development, planning, and management supposedly promotes national unity by giving groups in different regions of a country a greater ability to participate in planning and decision-making, and thus increases their stake in maintaining political stability.

Secondly, it will reduce overload and congestion in the channels of administration and communication. Also, it will allow projects to be completed sooner by giving local managers greater discretion in decision-making so as to enable them to cut through the "red tape" and the ponderous procedures often associated with overcentralized administrations.

A government of limited size is believed better suited for a more effective democracy and effective delivery of public services to meet the unique needs of the community. For a government to be democratic, the citizens of the polity must have a sense of control over the government.

This sense of control is more likely to be achieved when the citizen participation in the governmental process is full and meaningful. A local government of limited size is

considered more manageable for effective citizen participation, and thus more democratic.⁸⁾

In this paper, a preliminary attempt is made to review some of the issues central to the implementation of local self-governance in Korea. The major variables considered in this paper include those of institutional arrangements, political culture, and fiscal self-sufficiency.⁹⁾ However, the politics of decentralization will be highlighted first.

III. Politics of Decentralization

1. Nature and Concepts

According to Kochen and Deutsch, decentralization is not a value in itself. Its key values are quick responsiveness, reliability, adequacy, and quality of the needed

7) Dennis A. Rodinelli et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 5-9.

8) This point is made most persuasively by Robert A. Dahl, "The City in the Future of Democracy," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. LXI, No. 4 (Dec. 1967), pp. 953-970

9) D. A. Rodinelli et al. are showing the four main factors affecting the success or failure of decentralization policies as follows: (1) a degree of political commitment and administrative support, (2) attitudinal, behavioral, and cultural conditions conducive to decentralization, (3) effective design and organization of decentralization programs, and (4) adequate financial, human, and physical resources.

or requested service. With the organizational perspective, they say that "If we analyze the decentralization logically and completely, we should try to involve several dimensions such as who decentralizes, what is decentralized, where centralization occurs, and on what level we decentralize."¹⁰⁾

On the other hand, decentralization means an ideological principle, associated with objectives of self-reliance, democratic decision-making, popular participation in government, and accountability of public officials to citizens. Ultimately, decentralization is a political decision, and its implementation is a reflection of a country's political development process.

That is, greater equity in the allocation of government resources for investment is presumed more likely when representatives of a wide variety of political, religious, ethnic, and social groups participate in the development decision-making.¹¹⁾

In addition, decentralization is often justified as a way of managing national economic development more effectively or efficiently. Programs are decentralized with the expectation that delays will be reduced and that administrators' indifference to satisfying the needs of their clientele will be overcome. Many functions that are currently the responsibility of central ministries or

agencies are performed poorly because of the difficulty of extending central services to local communities. Indeed, for some activities, decentralization will be able to increase the efficiency of central ministries by relieving top management of routine, repetitive tasks and allowing them more time to plan and monitor programs that absolutely require central direction or control.¹²⁾

Vieira's study of forty-five countries indicates that the degree of decentralization (particularly devolution) is significantly correlated with five factors: (1) the age of the nation—older, well-established national governments having a higher degree of devolution than newer ones; (2) the size of gross national product—those countries with high levels of GNP tended to have a higher degree of devolution; (3) the level of development of mass media—those countries with a more sophisticated and widespread mass communication system tended to be more decentralized; (4) the level of industrialization—industrialized countries tended to be more decentralized than those with agricultural economies; and (5) the number of local governments—the greater the number of local units in the country, the greater the degree of decentralization.¹³⁾

12) *Ibid.*, p.7.

13) P.Vieira, Toward a theory of Decentralization : A Comparative View of Forty-Five Countries, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1967, pp.249-50.

10) M. Kochen and K. W. Deutsch, op. cit., pp. 17-21.

11) D.A.Rondinelli et al., op. cit., pp.8-9.

2. Types

Decentralization can be categorized into four types: deconcentration, delegation, devolution, and privatization.¹⁴⁾

(1) Deconcentration—the handing over of some amount of administrative authority or responsibility to lower levels within central government ministries and agencies.

(2) Delegation— the transfer of managerial responsibility for specifically defined functions to organizations that are outside the regular bureaucratic structure and that are only indirectly controlled by the central government.

(3) privatization— the divestiture by governments of responsibility for functions and the transfer of them to voluntary organizations or private enterprise.

(4) Devolution— Under devolution, local governments are autonomous and independent, and their legal status makes them separate or distinct from the central government.

Central authorities frequently exercise only indirect, supervisory control over such local units. It establishes reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationships between central and local governments. That is, the local governments are not merely subordinate

administrative units, but they have the ability to interact reciprocally with other units of government in the political system of which they are a part.^{15) 16)}

3. Advantages

Let us describe some of the political advantages of the decentralized government.¹⁷⁾

(1) Political decentralization frequently reduces the severity of conflict in a society. As Robert Dahl explains:¹⁸⁾ “American local governments have, then, permitted an important measure of local variety and heterogeneity. In so doing, doubtless they have reduced the strain on national institu-

15) In this paper, I will use the term “decentralization” mainly to refer to the concept of “devolution”.

16) Furniss identifies eight different ways of decentralization : i.e., economic, industrial, regional economic planning, administrative, political, legislative, corporate, millennial; Norman Furniss, “The Practical Significance of Decentralization,” Journal of Politics, Vol. 36 (1974), pp.961–973.

17) Thomas R.Dye. Politics in States and Communities, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. : Prentice–Hall, Inc., 1973), pp.33–35.

18) Robert A.Dahl, Pluralist Democracy in the United States : Conflict and Consent(Chicago : Rand McNally & Co., 1967), p.183, as quoted by T.R.Dye, op. cit., p.33.

14) D.A.Rondinelli et al., op. cit., pp.9–26

tions.

People are able to work out many of their problems in their states and localities, finding solutions which would lead to interminable debate and conflict if they were imposed uniformly throughout the United States.¹⁹⁾

(2) Decentralization distributes power more widely among different sets of leaders. The widespread distribution of power is generally thought to be a protection against tyranny; a plurality of leadership is generally believed to be more democratic than a single set of all-powerful leaders. As Robert Dahl put it:

State and local governments have provided a number of centers of power whose autonomy is strongly protected by Constitutional and political traditions....In dealing

with a governor or mayor, a President rarely if ever commands; he negotiates; he may even plead. Here then is a part of the intermediate stratum of leadership that Tocqueville looked to as a barrier to tyranny.²⁰⁾

(3) Decentralization allows more people to participate in the political system. Many people are given the opportunity to exercise political leadership; moreover, state and local governments are widely regarded as being "closer to the people".

(4) Decentralization makes government more manageable and efficient. Government becomes arbitrary when a bureaucracy far from the scene directs a local administrator to proceed with the impossible—local conditions notwithstanding. Decentralization softens the rigidity of law and makes unpopular laws more tolerable.

Precision and control of execution and the related dimension of stability of intent are two dimensions of power that are apt to increase by decentralization. In the first stage, recognition of the object of power is circumscribed by policies of decentralization. The domain of power is restricted. With the domain reduced, at the final stage, the accessibility of power is supposed to be greater; the social distance from top to bottom of the hierarchy is supposed to be smaller than in a centralized

19) On the other hand, M.Grodzins is also concerned with strain and conflict in the federal system. Among the several potential strains in the federal system Grodzins identified, for example, the ability of local communities to bypass those decisions of their state governments that affect them adversely, taking their appeals to federal authorities puts a strain on the normal mechanism of federalism by encouraging conflict between the federal government and the states: Morton Grodzins, The American System: A New View of Government in the U.S., Daniel J.Elazar(ed.) (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1966), pp. 326-330.

20) R.A.Dahl, op. cit., p.189.

arrangement. Where this actually is the case, this reduction provides greater possibility for review by the public and appraisal of execution of policies. This is one aspect of responsiveness.

Since the overall power of the systems rests with its ability to accomplish what it sets out to do, we can see that this becomes more feasible as the acceptability of its policies increases. In other words, decentralization presents an avenue by which power can be made more legitimate and converted to authority.²¹⁾

IV. Local Autonomy System in South Korea

1. Historical Background

The Korean history of local self-governance goes back to 1949 when a local autonomy law was promulgated in July. But, the local autonomy system was not put into reality until 1952 because of the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950.²²⁾ The first local elections since the founding of the Republic were held in 1952 to elect members of the city, county, and township councils.

21) M. Koehen and K. W. Deutsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-203.

22) Hee-Jin kim, ed., *Korea Annual 1980: A Comprehensive Handbook on Korea*, 17th ed. (Seoul: Hapdong News Agency, 1980), pp. 103-104.

Under a two-tier system provided for in the law, mayors of special cities²³⁾ and governors of provinces²⁴⁾ were appointed by the President while mayors of cities and chiefs of counties and townships were elected by 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 Syngman Rhee's government, the Local Autonomy Law was revised drastically to realize local self-government 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 nationwide 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.

23) At that time, there were two special cities: Seoul as the capital and Pusan as the second largest city.

24) South Korea is administratively divided into 9 provinces.

The military take-over on May 16, 1961 frustrated this dashing hope of a new era of local self-governance. All the local councils were disbanded and heads of local autonomous bodies named by the military 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 1963 and local governing functions have been performed by the Minister of Home Affairs and the respective 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 provided 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.²⁵⁾

The first local council election since 1961 military coup was held in 1991 at

both provincial and local lever. However, the heads of local authorities have still been appointed by the central government and their direct election will be postponed until 1995.

2. Institutional Issues

In designing a local government system for self-governance, there can be many institutional questions to be considered: i.e., (1) the extent of power to be decentralized to local government; (2) the type and variety of functions to be assigned to local government; (3) the particular type and units of local government to be granted with self-governing powers, and so on. Unfortunately, there seems to be no objective criteria to guide an evaluation and judgment on these questions.

However, as we have seen in American federalism, the institutional arrangements of a government system must be an evolving process, not a fixed system, in search of a better working balance in the distribution of powers and functions between the levels, types, and units of governments.

The question of intergovernmental distribution of powers and functions and the types of local government considered suitable for self-governance shall be reviewed here briefly.

(1) How Much Decentralization?

The local government of Korea today is

25) Korean Overseas Information Service, A Handbook of Korea, 4th ed. (Seoul: Samhwa Printing Co., Ltd, 1983), pp. 374-375.

suffering from an excessive uniformity in governmental functions, taxing authority, governmental structure and administrative procedures in addition to the strict supervision and control of the central government through the all powerful chief executives appointed by the central government.²⁶⁾ This controlled uniformity is believed to stifle creativity by allowing no local initiatives.²⁷⁾ The local self-government should be designed to serve as a vehicle to realize the local potential by allowing the localities to exercise their own policy and administrative initiatives in problem-identification and problem-solving.

From the American federal system, we can confirm again that local government is the only unit of government able to respond directly to the needs of persons wishing to govern themselves, flexible enough to adjust quickly to local needs and

problems, and able to provide immediate availability and service to its citizens.²⁸⁾ In other words, the role of local governments in the United States is to provide public goods and services to meet the essential needs in the daily life of the citizens, and local self-government is a mechanism to assure the citizen control over the processes through which policy decisions are made for those vital public goods and services.

Therefore, as a logical consequence, we can ideally say that local governments must be given greater power to self-organize and to act effectively to carry out its own policies and programs, not only for the improvement and orderly growth of the urban, human environment, but for the actualization of grass-roots democracy in the end.

In practice, the level or kind of decentralization is more a matter of empirical question which can vary from locality to locality and from time to time. However, a few guidelines may be considered : i.e., (1) the extent and autonomy granted must be adequate to guarantee a sufficient range of local initiatives in policy and administration; (2) the extent and type of autonomy must be kept dynamic and flexible to make it change with environmental demands. Perhaps, a safe way to initiate a local autonomy system in a developing country like Korea is to start with a limited autonomy and to expand it as the needs

26) For example, the mayor of the city of Seoul is appointed directly by the President. The provincial governors and the mayor of the city of Pusan are appointed by the President through the Prime Minister upon recommendation by the Minister of Home Affairs. On the other hand, mayors and county chiefs are appointed by the President with the recommendation of provincial governors. Thus, the president has virtually overall control over the appointment of local government chiefs.

27) Edward R. Wright, ed., *op. cit.*, p.67.

28) Philip J. Rutledge, "Federal—Local Relations and the Mission of the City," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 416(Nov. 1974), p.83.

and capacity of local government justify.

(2) Functional Assignment

The ways in which governmental functions may be assigned to different types and units of local governments are an issue of long-standing debate. In the United States, there have been repeated efforts by various groups and individuals to tackle this question.²⁹⁾ The U. S Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, for example, studied the appropriate jurisdictions of governmental functions and activities whether they are suited for area-wide, shared, or local. And Hallman also studied the suitability of a large variety of governmental functions for small local jurisdictions.³⁰⁾

The diversity and confusion in the assignment of government functions are particularly vast in the United States. For a solution to this problem to be effective, both technical sophistication and political choice are called for.

To guide this choice, a set of criteria have been developed.

They are : (1) economic efficiency; (2) fiscal equity; (3) political accountability; and (4) administrative effectiveness.³¹⁾

And an application of these criteria to assignment choice in greater detail is shown in Table 1. These criteria are developed to guide the assignment choice of governmental functions in the U. S., but they may be at least in part applicable to the evaluation process of functional assignment of Korean local government.

(3) Local Government Units

What are the appropriate units and types of local government for self-governance?³²⁾

The smallest unit of local government, villages(RI), is excluded from the categories of local government eligible for self-governance under the present legal provisions.

In Korea, an urban area is governed by a city and the city boundaries extend to the fringe of the urban area. It is expandable as an urban growth at the fringe progresses.

In rural areas, the exclusion of villages gives the appearance of improving rationality for administrative efficiency.

29) Morton Grodzins, The American System : A New View of Government in the U.S., Daniel J.Elazar(ed.) (Chicago : Rand McNally & Company, 1966), pp.307-316.

30) Howard W.Hallman, Government By Neighborhoods (Washington, D.C. : Center for Governmental Studies, 1973).

31) Harlan Hahn and Charles Levine(eds.), Urban Politics : Past, Present, and Future (N.Y. : Longman, Inc., 1980), pp.301-315.

32) Administratively, Korean local government is divided into 9 provinces and 6 special cities which enjoy provincial status. According to the size of population and area, a province is subdivided into county, city, town, township, village, ward, and precinct.

However, villages are long established local government jurisdictions and the most basic unit of local government. Namely, a village is a natural community with which emotional identification of belongingness (a sense of roots) is made.³³⁾ Villages evoke a sense of loyalty from the current as well as former residents. Therefore, villages can be called a true grass-roots government, naturally fit for self-governance. The villages may not be suited for a wide range of complex governmental responsibilities, but they may be most effective for a role of community-building and a sense of commonwealth.

Another jurisdictional issue of local autonomy is that of large special cities such as Seoul, Pusan, Taegu, and Incheon with populations ranging from one million to approximately ten million. Are these megacities suitable for meaningful self-governance? Can citizens in these cities participate in the governing process beyond casting a vote at election times? A mere reduction of the control and supervision coming from the central government does not make the big cities a democratic government or a meaningful self-governing body. The citizens must have a sense of control over the process of government. So

considered, large cities require a special arrangement in structure and procedure in order to make them politically democratic and administratively autonomous. Some form of a neighborhood government may be an alternative to this predicament of size.³⁴⁾

3. Political Culture

Local self-governance and democracy is more than an elected government, but a way of political life based on a set of values that constitutes political culture. That is, in addition to being limited by their constitutions and charters, local governments are also limited by their citizens' attitudes, beliefs, and expectations about what governments should do, who should participate, and what rules should govern the political games. Some political cultures may place very strict limits on what a local government can do, while other political cultures may allow their governments considerable freedom.³⁵⁾

There are lots of theories concerning the political centralization of politics, administration, values, and even emotion in Korea. According to Henderson, "the

33) Vincent S. Brandt, A Korean Village (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard Univ. Press, 1971), pp.7-11.

34) Milton Kotler, Neighborhood Government (Indianapolis : Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), pp.27-50.

35) John J. Harrigan, op. cit., pp.32-33.

physics of Korean political dynamics appears to resemble a strong vortex tending to sweep all active elements of the society upward toward central power."³⁶⁾

In a word, he is depicting the Korean people's traditional authoritarianism and a centripetal tendency toward political power. As a matter of fact, the fundamental aspects of a Confucian society, which determines its distinctive political culture, is its authoritarian nature. That is, the Confucian social structure delimits zones in which, without any question at all, one person has total authority. The typical example is the family. In the family, the father is the dominant figure—so dominant that all others have to be subservient to him.

Thus, in Korean society, it is somewhat difficult to cultivate such a set of values underlying a democratic political culture as citizenship, public interest, compromise, and so on. To take one example, in Korean tradition and culture, compromise has been deemed undesirable. A person who compromises is 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 compromise is an agent to grease the machinery of democratic self-government since the difference of opinions among citizens and policy-makers

can be resolved through compromise.

However, these values, attitudes, and beliefs, which are essential for self-government 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. These experiences to germinate a new value are what Korea needs most to create a new political culture of self-government

4. Fiscal Self—Sufficiency

The implementation of local self-government is contingent upon local fiscal conditions. However, in any modern nation states, the level of local fiscal capacity varies widely from region to region. This variation in local fiscal capacity seems unavoidable so long as there is a variance in the level and pattern of local economic development.

To examine this issue from the comparative angle, the degree of fiscal self-sufficiency was compared between selected cities of Korea and the United States. Korean cities included in Table 2 are a mixture of large and medium sizes, while those of the United States are the five largest cities.

36) Gregory Henderson, *op.cit.*, p.5

The U.S. cities represent both economically distressed cities like New York City and Philadelphia as well as boom towns like Houston.

Table 2 : Degree of Fiscal Self-Sufficiency of Large Korean and U.S. Cities : Locally Raised Revenues as a Percent of Total Local General Revenues

Korean Cities		U.S. Cities	
1979	%	1980	%
Seoul	94.7	New York City	56.0
Ulsan	95.7	Chicago	56.8
Taejon	57.5	Los Angeles	72.8
Pohang	47.4	Philadelphia	55.2
Choonchon	49.6	Houston	86.2

Source : The U.S. city data are derived from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1981 (Washington, D.C. : U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), p. 302 ; and the Korean city data are adapted from Se-wook Chung, "A Model to Develop Local Fiscal Indicators," International Seminar on Local Administration and Regional Development, Nov. 8, 1982, Seoul.

The degree of fiscal self-sufficiency varies widely depending on the economic conditions of the cities for both groups. The Korean cities' fiscal self-sufficiency ranges from less than 50 percent for Pohang and Choonchon to greater than 90 percent

for Seoul and Ulsan. The U.S. cities' fiscal self-sufficiency also varies greatly although the range is much less than that seen in Korean cities. However, in view of the relatively high level of fiscal dependency of American cities in comparison with that of Korean cities, it can be said that fiscal self-sufficiency is not necessarily a prerequisite for local autonomy.

V. Summary and Conclusion

Traditionally, Korean government has been highly centralized and the roots of Korean centralism are deep and strong. However, the weaknesses of such extremely centralized systems most often are larger and more serious. That is, there is always the danger that procedural efficiency can result in arbitrarily and incautiously planned public policy.

Political decentralization frequently reduces the severity of conflict in a society and also distributes power more widely among different sets of leaders. The widespread distribution of power is thought to be a protection against tyranny.

The American federal system offers unity without uniformity. By reserving to the states considerable power, it lessened the likelihood of centralized tyranny. A federal system may be appropriate for any developing country in that it is flexible and permits changes in the distribution of

power among governmental units and changes in the distribution of power among governmental units and changes in the balance of power without changing the fundamental charter of government.

In Korea, the history of local autonomy is short, but rugged. The experiment of local self-governance has gone through many changes until it was suspended in 1961. Being dormant for thirty years, local autonomy emerged in 1991 as a major political issue following the launch of the sixth Republic. However, no concrete steps have yet been taken toward the implementation of local self-governance in full scale.

This paper has reviewed three variables believed central to local autonomy in Korea: (1) the extent of powers decentralized and the kinds of functions assigned to local governments must be appropriate for full potentials of the localities and their governments. The exclusion of the smallest local government unit, villages, from local government categories eligible for autonomy needs be reconsidered. Those mega-cities like Seoul and Pusan are believed too big for self-governance. Some form of neighborhood government must be instituted so as to facilitate a relative ease in popular participation to governing process; (2) self-government and democracy are a way of life, a political culture, and a value system. A sense of public interest,

citizenship, and the willingness to compromise are considered some of the important values underlying a democratic political culture. Korea is weak in all of these values due to its historical and cultural reasons. These values must be cultivated and accorded an opportunity for a cumulative development; (3) When the degree of fiscal self-sufficiency of Korean local governments is compared with that of the U.S. local governments, there is little difference between them. So, it can be said that fiscal capability is important for all governments, but fiscal self-sufficiency is not necessarily a prerequisite for local autonomy.

Finally, I want to conclude citing Henderson:

Solution to the basic problem, therefore, does not seem to lie primarily with central government, nor with changing or tinkering with its forms.... A vortex problem can be solved only in terms of the creation of alternatives to central power, by decentralization. If cure is sought, there is no alternative but to move toward a pluralist society.³⁷⁾

37) Gregory Henderson, *op. cit.*, pp.366-367.

**Table 1 : Assignment Criteria and Their Relationship to the
Level and Form of Government to Which a Function Should be Assigned**

Criteria Subcomponent	Level of Government/Type of Government To Which Function is Assigned
ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY Economies of Scale	Areawide or State
FISCAL EQUITY – Economic Externalities	Areawide. or State
FISCAL EQUITY – Fiscal Equalization	Areawide. or State
ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS Geographic Adequacy	Areawide. or State
POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY Access and Control	Local
POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY Citizen participation	Local
ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY – Service Competi- tion	Local
ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY – Public Pricing	Technically Proficient
ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS Management Capability	Technically Proficient
ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS Legal Adequacy	Authoritative
ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS General Purpose Character	Authoritative
ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTIVENESS Intergovernmental Flexibility	Cooperative

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〈국문초록〉

- 김익식 -

일찌기 Gregory Henderson은 한국의 정치과정을 오랫동안 관찰한 후 한국은 현대 국가들 가운데 가장 중앙집권적인 정치구조를 갖고 있으며, 한국의 정치는 소용돌이(a vortex)를 닮고 있다고 갈파한 바 있

다. 결국, Henderson은 한국의 제반 문제점에 대한 해결책으로서 분권화가 절실하다고 보았던 것이다.

본고에서는 이같은 Henderson의 주장에 입각하여 한국이 나아갈 방향으로서 지방분권화(decentralization)이념과 그 제도적 구현으로서 지방자치(local autonomy)의 문제를 비판적으로 검토하고 있다. 먼저, 정치적 현상으로서의 지방분권화가 갖는 의미와 내용을 살펴본 후, 여러가지 다른 형태의 분권화를 분류해 보고, 끝으로 정치적 분권화가 가져다 줄 수 있는 장점들을 고찰하고 있다.

두번째는, 이같은 분권화 이념을 제도적으로 구현하기 위한 지방자치제를 한국에

도입하기 위해 고려되어야 할 몇가지 중요한 변수들을 검토하고 있다. 개발도상국의 분권화정책을 연구하고 있는 Dennis Rondinelli는 개도국의 분권화 정책의 성공 또는 실패에 커다란 영향을 미치고 있는 4가지 요소들을 식별하고 있는바, 이는 정치적 약속과 행정적 지원정도, 정치문화의 수준, 제도적 뒷받침 및 인적·재정적자원이 그것이다.

본고에서는 Rondinelli의 이같은 관찰에 입각하여 지방자치제의 한국도입과 관련한 3가지 주요 쟁점들 - 제도적 장치, 정치문화 및 재정자립도 - 을 비판적으로 검토하고 있다.