

## PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE IN KOREAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION\*\*

Fred W. Riggs\*

### INTRODUCTION

It is a great pleasure for me to return to Korea 44 years after I participated in the founding session of the Korean Association for Public Administration. The far-reaching changes that have taken place since then make me think about the changes likely to occur during the next 40 years — what will Public Administration in Korea be like in 2040? I know I shall not see them, but some of you will, and I ask you to think about them and how they may re-shape your lives. Perhaps after I've stopped talking, you can contribute to this discourse by offering your own forecasts.

### THE PAST

When the U.S. State Department asked me to accept an invitation from the government of South Korea to come to Seoul during the very hot summer of 1956, there was no center for the study of Public Administration in Korea. Now there must be a hundred such centers, led by Seoul National University.

During that summer, I had extended conversations with Bark Dong-Suh, a graduate student at SNU,

about the anticipated support from the U.S. for a university contract that would facilitate the establishment of your own pioneer center for administrative studies — GSPA<sup>1)</sup> at SNU. The introductory discussions launched that summer contributed, I believe, to the conclusion of a contract with the University of Minnesota. I was able to work more closely and fruitfully with Dr. Bark during his year at the East-West Center (1963 ~ 1964). We had several colleagues from other countries in Eastern Asia and developed our ideas about comparative and development administration. As for the subsequent developments at GSPA, you know much more than I do so I won't say anything more about them.

However, I can say something more about my own experiences in Korea and how they helped me develop my own thinking about the problems of public administration in developing countries. One result was the creation of the prismatic model. I was also able to play a leading role in the work of ASPA's Comparative Administration Group (CAG) which had a significant influence not only in America but, I believe, in Korea and many other countries. It has been succeeded by the Section for Comparative and International Administration (SICA) whose work is now promoted through a Web Site.<sup>2)</sup> In addition, there are now quite a few

---

\* Professor, University of Hawaii

\*\* This Paper was Presented to the Seoul Association for Public Administration, Seoul, May 20, 2000.

---

1) <http://gspa.snu.ac.kr>.

2) <http://www.uncc.edu/~stwalker/sic/>

other sites on the INTERNET for comparative and development administration – you can find links to many of them on my home page at: PA.<sup>3)</sup>

In 1956 I was working for the Public Administration Clearing House (PACH) in New York. My Ph. D. studies at Columbia University had been focused on International Relations and Chinese Philosophy, a reflection of my boyhood in China where I was born and intended to make my career. I took no classes in Public Administration, but I thought a lot about the problems of government that have proved so intractable in that country. I was frustrated in my desire to return to China by civil war and the rise of Communism – I thought going to Korea would be my best opportunity.

Moreover, I was influenced by my studies of Chinese Philosophy which I hoped to deepen by learning about a country where the Confucian influence had been so profound. Moreover, I wanted to apply some important lessons I had learned from my father – they deeply influenced my approach to the preparation of lectures on Public Administration to be presented in Seoul in 1956. I should explain that my father had been a professor at the University of Nanking where he founded the first Department of Agricultural Engineering in China – now there are quite a few. I'll say more about his experience below.

But first let me explain that the PACH had been funded by the Ford Foundation to expand its services to the public administration community. It had just opened a new international office in New York, close to the United Nations. The UN was about to launch a program in Public Administration that would help newly developing countries improve their capacity to implement public policies and manage development programs. I was the assistant to Charles Ascher, director of this office, and had close contacts in the UN as a result. When the new Korean government, under President

Syngman Rhee, asked the U.S. for help in public administration, Washington turned to the UN for advice, and they nominated me after consulting with Charles Asher.

In turn, I went to the UN to seek advice, asking how I should approach the task of introducing administrative studies in Korea. The answer I received was stunning in its simplicity – and, I believe, its irrelevance. I was told that if I just followed Luther Gulick's advice and used POSDCORB as an acronym, giving lectures on Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting and Budgeting, I could not go wrong. Somehow, this struck me as wrong but I did not know what would be right. My father's experience haunted me, however, compelling me to acknowledge that, without a deep knowledge of the existing situation in Korea, much of what I might say would be useless or even misleading.

Here is where my father's experience became relevant to my own thinking. He had gone to China in 1916 hoping to use his knowledge of American farm technology, based on studies at Ohio State University, to help Chinese farmers increase their agricultural efficiency and output. He soon discovered that because of technical and cultural differences, most of what he knew about farming methods could not be used in China.

For example, American farmers depended heavily on tractors to plow dry land whereas Chinese farmers normally used a water buffalo to plow flooded rice fields. However, tractors that could easily move on dry land would not work in flooded paddy fields. Moreover, the oil needed to power tractors was not available to Chinese farmers, even if they had the money needed to buy tractors, which they did not. When my father moved to Nanking to establish a department for agricultural engineering, he decided to teach courses about existing Chinese farm technology and to investigate ways in which it might be improved – he felt that knowing about how American farmers farmed

3) <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~fredr/site.htm#pa>.

their fields would not help Chinese farmers at all. In fact, it would only make them feel frustrated and angry. Consequently, he did not waste much time talking about the American know-how in ag-engineering. I felt it would be equally futile for me to say much about the supposedly “superior” American administrative practices.

Translating this experience into my own Korean adventure, I thought I should attempt to learn about existing administrative realities and try to understand why they existed and what could be done to improve their efficiency and effectiveness, working within the constraints of established social, economic and political forces. Because I knew so little about them, I spent every possible free moment that summer interviewing Koreans and making field observations, including an extended tour around the country from Seoul to Pusan. However, I did go through with a series of lectures, with the help of an interpreter, in which I talked about Western ideas of public administration, stressing the distinctive political and economic context which made them useful. I argued that these ideas might or might not work in Korea, something only Koreans could determine by their own research and experience.

The class I met with was sponsored by KOTI, the Korean Officials Training Institute, which at that time occupied an old wooden building that the Japanese had used to train their local Korean subordinates who had been employed to help them rule the conquered country. Many were senior men with limited education who were about to take on new responsibilities for which they were quite unprepared. I'm afraid that there was really very little I could offer to help them cope with this momentous challenge. Today, of course, KOTI has a great new building and a vast program to help Korean public administrators.

I was also able during the summer of 1956 to hold a small seminar in English with a few Korean scholars and officials who had, despite grave

obstacles, been able to get a higher education. I think a few were in government service, but others were associated with universities, including Bark Dong-Suh, with whom I also had many private conversations. Looking back now, I believe the most important outcome of my summer in Seoul was to facilitate Bark negotiations with the American aid officers, including a liaison person for the University of Minnesota. Of course, many people were involved – a history of GSPA/SNU can be found at: History.<sup>4)</sup> According to this account, earlier discussions had already been launched in 1955, but I do not recall hearing about them during my visit. In any event, the results have been most impressive and I believe the GSPA project has been one of the most successful among those supported by the U.S. government. Your own Association is evidence of this success.

In addition to the SNU contract, some members of my seminar and, I believe, a few students from the lecture class, decided to join forces and create a Korean association to promote the study and practice of public administration in Korea. They held a formal meeting to confirm their agreement and to launch the association officially. They kindly asked me to attend and I was delighted to do so, though I cannot claim any credit for the outcome – they did it all themselves. Again, you will know much more than I do about the results of that decision and the progress that has been made in Korean Public Administration since 1976. In addition to University-based research and teaching, you can now also benefit from government-sponsored research, such as that promoted by KIPA,<sup>5)</sup> the Korean Institute for Public Administration, as explained by its president Kim Young Pyoung.<sup>6)</sup>

The Prismatic Model. Apart from any possible influence I may have had during my first trip to Korea, I want to tell you that it had a profound

---

4) <http://gspa.snu.ac.kr/info/history/history.htm>.

5) <http://kipa.re.kr/home.htm>.

6) [http://kipa.re.kr/home.htm/guide/e\\_green.htm](http://kipa.re.kr/home.htm/guide/e_green.htm).

influence on my own thinking. The following year, after joining the faculty of Indiana University, I gave some lectures that resulted in an extended essay, "Agraria and Industria: Toward a Typology of Comparative Administration." in William J. Siffin, ed. *Toward the Comparative Study of Public Administration*. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press: 23~116). What I tried to explain in this book was based on my observations in Korea and my father's experiences — essentially, I argued that in traditional societies dominated from above by hereditary rulers whose authority had supernatural origins a pattern of hierarchic authoritarian public administration had evolved. It resembled also the Confucian model of an ideal family in which, from fathers through wives and sons to daughters, strict rules of duty to superiors and honor based on official codes of conduct were enforced.

By contrast, in modern industrialized democracies, officials were seen as public servants, responsible for the general welfare based on notions of popular sovereignty — top politicians are elected to make policy and manage public administration on behalf of the citizens to whom they are accountable. In this context, I saw that the realities in countries like Korea mixed together these two models — although the old monarchic system and the yangban officials had been terminated, and new norms based on Western democratic models had been introduced, the outcome was a curious and conflicted mixture of both models. I talked about some of the possible consequences of this mixture, but was not able to create any clear picture in my own mind until the following year when I was able to do some field research in Thailand under a grant from the U.S. Social Science Research Council.

While working in Thailand I hit upon the optical metaphor that produced the prismatic model. I saw that the most distinctive feature of modern industrialized societies is a high degree of functional

specialization, well represented in our universities where every discipline and profession has been given its own distinctive organizational home in a department or school. By contrast, the typical structure of traditional societies is undifferentiated, all functions being performed at home in the family — religious, economic, political, recreational, social, and cultural. The educational form prevalent in such a society is the domestic tutor, someone who teaches all the children in a family and relies on some classical texts to cover every subject. Using the optical metaphor, I wrote that traditional social structures can be represented by white light in which all colors of the rainbow are fused, whereas modern societies are diffracted so that every different function can be viewed as a separate color — red, orange, yellow, and blue — as visualized in a rainbow.

In the Agraria/Industrial metaphor, I could not find any term to represent a mixture of the two life-styles and social systems. The optical metaphor, however, conveniently provides the prism as a symbol of the mixture. When white light passes through a prism, it emerges as a rainbow of many colors. To be prismatic, therefore, in my symbology, is simply to mingle the contrary features of fused and diffracted (or refracted) light. Actually, when we think of statistical distributions of items graded on a scale between one and ten, we find that most cases may fall at intermediate levels, between four and six. It is an irony of Western thinking to convert contradictories into contraries, polar opposites. Actually, there are very few real contradictories like male/female, or odd/even. More often, we find contraries like hot/cold, or big/little (infinity/zero). Most cases fall between these extremes — they are mediums. Sad to say, English offers few terms to name these intermediate cases. Between efficient and inefficient lie most cases — we do not find semi-efficient in the literature. Eastern thought is more realistic. In the Chinese yin/yang symbolism, contradictories are seen as complemen-

tary — only by linking them harmoniously can one visualize reality. In Buddhist thought, the middle-way is celebrated as right and proper, an approach or posture that falls between opposite and equally bad extremes. The Eight-Fold Path is a litany of right thinking and living based on such meditates.

I did not go so far as to praise the prismatic form as inherently superior to its diffracted and fused contraries, but I certainly think it is more normal and widespread in the world today than either of the two contrary extremes — the ancient traditional or the highly rationalized modern. My thinking on this subject, much influenced by a following year (1958~1959) in the Philippines at its evolving School of Public Administration, led to the writing of a book *Administration in Developing Countries: The Theory of Prismatic Society*. (Boston: Houghton 1964, Mifflin). It was subsequently translated and published in Korea in 1966.

### **The Sala Model**

Let me illustrate the prismatic concept as applied to public administration by reference to the sala model. In Korea many country homes — perhaps in cities also? — have a front court or room where outsiders may visit family members. In some Western houses, including my family's former home, there is also a special room called a parlor, which is always kept neat for visitors while the back family rooms are often messed up and barred to outsiders. The Spanish word sala is used in the Philippines for a room, in parallel with the French *salle*, and English *salon* (and *saloon*). It was also used in Thailand for a similar purpose in the architecture of temples.

I decided to adopt the word to talk about the sala model as a typically prismatic feature of public administration. To explain, in fused (traditional) societies the room used by any high official for public business was in his home — for kings, audiences were held in a crown room which may

still be seen in palace museums. I used court to refer to the place where official business was done in the home of any high official. Teaching was done by tutors, either at their own home or in their pupil's homes. Guild craftsmen also worked in their homes. The more fused a society, the more all functions were carried out in a family setting, a home.

By contrast, in the differentiated modern model, offices are normally separated from homes. One has to commute to work, whether one is a business man, official, or university professor. A sharp distinction is made, architecturally and topologically, between the office and the home. In the sala model, the functions of office and home are somehow combined, often in an uneasy mixture. I describe how I first saw this in the office of the mayor of Manila where he had all visitors ushered into a large office where he could see all of them while, simultaneously, holding a confidential whispered conversation with these visitors, one at a time. Occasionally he would interrupt his private chats to say something in a loud voice that all in the room could hear.

Of course, not every official today works in the same way — some still work at home, others in small offices, but one can also find the hybrid sala in which private and public functions are commingled. The sala may also be found in the business world as in many Chinese shop houses where the first floor is used for public business while upper floors are reserved for family use.

Looking to the future, this may well become the most prevalent way of life for many of us who increasingly use the computer and INTERNET to transact business from our offices at home — personally, now that I no longer teach, I visit my office at the university once a week, but do most of my work at home.

At another level, consider that exchanges of goods and services were based traditionally on reciprocity — there was no price mechanism to put a market

value on work or goods. In modern societies, by contrast, virtually everything is marketized and prices are fixed for anything. The transitional situation lacks any recognized term. However, consider the Chinese expression, *kan hsieh* (cum shaw) which expresses the idea of a gift (bribe) paid to assure some action by the recipient. Tip, in English, has a similar ambiguity: originally an acronym for “To Insure Performance,” it was given to bar tenders to permit one to move to the front of a queue. It now means a gratuity paid after a service to express thanks. In a fused society, payments are just gifts, used the way we honor friends and relatives on ceremonial occasions, like birthdays. In a refracted society, they are wages or sale prices for a *quid pro quo*. Price bargaining, *cum shaw*, and bribes reflect transitional postures that bridge the gap between gifts and wages.

Another aspect of the prismatic model that struck me as especially significant involved formalism. I use this word to represent a substantial discrepancy between what is officially or formally prescribed and what is actually practiced. To say one thing but mean something else is formalistic. Let me mention a good example that I found in Thailand involving the basic structure of political power and legitimacy. Since public officials rely heavily on public acceptance of their right to act, this matter is basic to the effectiveness of public administration. When laws and regulations are obeyed only because of fear of punishment, the costs of administering government policies escalate. An underlying premise of public administration theory involves the prevalence of legitimate authority — people will normally obey the law and respect officials because they accept the right of those in power to rule.

Sovereignty. The basic principle that legitimizes the exercise of such authority by officials is called sovereignty. In traditional civilizations, sovereignty had some kind of supernatural basis — kings, emperors, and sultans were referred to as sove-

reigns because, when they gave commands, they acted with what Chinese called a “mandate from Heaven.” Court ceremonies and sacrifices were used to legitimize royal sovereignty and, thereby, to bring peace and prosperity to all loyal subjects. Palaces and temples were located geomantically in order to take advantage of spiritual forces — what the Chinese called “*feng shuey*” (wind and water). The location of the Korean royal palace, now a museum, provides a good example. Obedience to a king’s authority was based less on fear of punishment than on belief in the benefits a sovereign would confer on loyal subjects.

Modern, secular societies have rejected the supernatural basis of sovereignty and replaced it with a rationalistic belief that the authority of government is vested in every individual’s personal sovereignty. In its earliest forms, popular sovereignty involve the active participation of all citizens in the making of public policies — the ancient Greek city state is the best known example. However, all modern societies are too big to make direct democracy possible, but through the representative process elected assemblies are able to act, on behalf of their constituencies and, thereby, to legitimize the decisions made by governments. Thus the legitimacy of modern governments hinges on widespread acceptance of the myth that public authority is anchored in popular sovereignty. The efficiency of public administration depends on the willingness of citizens to obey authority because officials have the legal right to regulate their lives.

The transition from royal (divine) sovereignty to popular (secular) sovereignty cannot be made overnight and typically involves an extended transition period when both forms of legitimacy are widely accepted and clash with each other. A highly prismatic form of government involves the formalistic invocation of both types of sovereignty even when, in fact, government is based on brute force, as found in military dictatorships. In Thailand, for example, I found an almost pure case of

this type of formalistic sovereignty. Shortly after I arrived in Bangkok in 1957, parliamentary elections were held with much publicity and popular excitement. I was able to observe the procedure and saw that all the rules of open fair elections were strictly followed. The elected members of Parliament represented various competing parties and were able to debate proposed legislation in an open and unrestricted way and they approved bills by majority vote. This was the formal aspect of governance, designed to legitimize public policies in the eyes of all citizens who had come to accept the principles of popular sovereignty.

In fact, of course, public policies were made by a group of appointed officials (military officers and civil servants) who had seized power, occupied all cabinet positions, and actually controlled the parliament. They did this primarily by reserving 50% of the seats for government appointees — military officers and civil servants — puppets who voted as they were ordered to. In addition, the regime was able to control the votes of many other parliamentarians by means of “pork barrel” allocations — local projects selected by MPs who agreed to support government policies would be generously funded, while those who voted against the government would receive nothing. By such means, a ruling group actually composed of public officials (with military officers in the lead) could easily dominate an elected assembly that went through all the proper motions prescribed by modern theories of democracy theory.

As for traditional sovereignty, the government was able to maintain the support of peasants, the rural masses, and even many uneducated city dwellers by perpetuating the monarchy. The royal institution was supported with much fanfare and formalistic acclaim. Indeed, the monarchy was so highly regarded that severe punishments were imposed on anyone who presumed to criticize the king or the Buddhist religion. The temples and priestly practices which permeated the realm were

generously supported by the government which, of course, was also legitimized in the eyes of a devout people by its religious practices. Interestingly, the promoters of revolution against the absolute monarchy in 1934 called, at first, for the establishment of a republic and the complete abolition of the monarchy. Later on, when the king capitulated and offered to do as he was told in exchange for keeping the throne, the conspirators changed their minds. They quickly saw the advantages of maintaining the royal facade. By controlling royal proclamations, they would gain legitimacy in the minds of all subjects still holding to traditional beliefs.

Subsequently, I discovered that many other countries caught in a time-warp between traditional and modern notions of sovereignty had embraced similarly formalistic practices. I reported my findings in an article “Fragility of the Third World’s Regimes.” (*International Social Science Journal*, No. 136 May, 1993: 199~243) Subsequently, in an essay prepared for a symposium, July 1996, honoring the work of Dwight Waldo, I offered further thoughts on this matter under the heading of maladministration<sup>7)</sup> An abridged version of this paper was published as “Modernity and Bureaucracy.” (*Public Administration Review*, Vol. 57/4, 1997: 347~353)

In the Korean case, the monarchy had been overthrown by the Japanese conquerors only to be replaced by an alien Meiji Emperor and brutal military imperialism. Even Japanese democracy was formalistic in the sense that democratic forms had been established by imperial fiat, not by real popular vote. By the time independence came to Korea, after World War II, the traditional basis for sovereignty had been long discredited and the people were familiar only with the use of force, not legitimate sovereignty. An effort was made, under the American military occupation, to establish

---

7) [http://www2.Hawaii.edu/~fredr/6\\_syr5b.thm#malad](http://www2.Hawaii.edu/~fredr/6_syr5b.thm#malad).

representative government. However, in 1956 when I came to Korea, the first effort to institute democracy as a fragile imported system, under President Syngman Rhee, was already in disrepute.

The military governments that followed replaced a quasi-legitimate with illegitimate governments, although they always preserved a formalistic facade of representative institutions. Rising protests against military rule culminated in 1987 with the adoption of a new constitution that established an electoral basis for choosing the president, but it was not until 1992 that the first non-military candidate, Kim Yong Sam, was elected, to be followed in 1997 by the election of President Kim Dae Jung.

For the first time in Korea, bringing an opposition party to power meant that the choice of a president had been determined by a popular vote. Earlier elections had really been referenda designed to legitimize the rule of someone chosen by established rulers. After a long struggle, South Korea has achieved legitimate rule by representative government, replacing a long transition during which formalistic democracy and military rule had prevailed.

## THE PRESENT

Perhaps this is the right place to start talking about the present. Obviously, you in my audience know far more about the present situation in Korean Public Administration than I do. I hope you will tell me about it and I wish to be your student. However, I have some questions to raise first because many of you will have studied public administration at SNU or some other Korean University, and you will have had practical experience working for the government. Undoubtedly, what you studied was based in some degree on concepts and theories imported from America and other Western countries. However, increasingly, I believe and hope you have also been

looking closely at Korean public administration, studying its historical background and the transitions through which it has evolved into what you have today. No doubt, in many ways Korean administration is very similar today to what one finds in many other countries, both in Western and non-Western countries. However, I expect that in some other respect, traditional practices have been preserved, or co-exist, less or more harmoniously with modern practices — and no doubt innovative ideas have also come into being that are uniquely Korean. What are they?

An important question for which I have no answer hinges on the effects of the transition from military domination to representative government during the last decade of the 20th century. How has that political change affected the performance of Korean public officials, and the attitude of the public toward official actions? I would expect the most dramatic changes to have been those affecting the role and status of military officers, but they could well be similar results for civil servants. I would be interested both in their self-perceptions and in the attitude toward them expressed by ordinary citizens.

The transition from traditional to modern ways of life involves, of course, many other variables — not just the basis for governmental legitimacy, although that is a very important factor. A tangible aspect involves physical technologies. Consider the Korean Institute for Science and Technology, KIST.<sup>8)</sup> It is a government sponsored research agency responsible for developing new technologies that would be especially appropriate for use in Korea — by contrast with the imported technologies so often promoted by multi-national corporations. I have not been able to discover how successful it was and whether or not it still exists, but the idea was very much along the lines of what I would have recommended for Korean Public Administra-

---

8) <http://www.kist.re.kr/teams/kist>.



tion — why not develop innovative practices that would be particularly suitable for solving Korean problems? In many situations, surely, neither the traditions of the past nor the innovations borrowed from foreign sources are precisely right for application in Korea. I suppose that the establishment of a Ministry of Science and Technology represents formal recognition by the government of the important role technologies play in the processes of modernization.

### **Promises and Prospects**

I hope some of you can tell me about your successes and failures in developing truly indigenous administrative ideas and practices — some may even be so useful that they will be borrowed for use and further adaptation in some foreign countries. Let me suggest an example based on a current development of great significance. According to a current news report, “Seoul and Pyongyang simultaneously announced in early April [2000] that President Kim Dae-jung would visit the North Korean capital June 12~14 for the summit with North Korea’s top leader Kim Jong-il, the biggest diplomatic breakthrough in half a century of division and enmity.” See details at: [Pyongyang](#).<sup>9)</sup>

The same Korea Herald report said that: “At the previous three rounds of preliminary talks, the two sides reportedly agreed in principle that President Kim would hold two to three meetings with the North Korean leader and would be accompanied by a 130-member entourage.” Clearly, this suggests that a substantial number of officials from the government in Seoul will engage in conversations with counterparts in North Korea to talk about various issues involved in the effort to terminate or at least de-escalate the war that has, formally, blocked intercourse and cooperation between fellow

Koreans on both sides of the DMZ boundary.

To me, this sounds like a very exciting and hopeful development that will raise questions without precedents anywhere in the world. I do hope they will succeed and I expect that, in the process, it will be necessary to make agreements that will permit new kinds of organizational arrangements to be created. Perhaps I can learn more about the subject when I visit Seoul on May 20. But let me offer a comment here based on my sense that ethnic nationalism has become a major force in the modern world. In most countries, ethnonational movements are divisive seeking to promote new cleavages that will permig marginalized communities to become independent states. By contrast, as everyone knows, modern nationalism in Korea has focused on the re-unification of a divided nation. I have discussed this matter in a working paper that will soon be published by UNESCO — it’s already available on the Web at: [Modern Nationalism](#).<sup>10)</sup> Such a movement has already succeeded in Germany, but the Korean and Chinese cases remain unresolved. Although the paper focuses mainly on separatist movements, I think it is also relevant for re-unification questions and would welcome any reader’s comments.

To Conclude: The main point I’d like to make, however, is that there have been vast changes in Korean Public Administration during the past half century, the years when members of SAPA have matured, studied the field, and gained experience as practitioners and/or as scholars and teachers. In this process South Korea has already emerged as a world power. How was that achieved? Viewed as a learning experience, what has been learned, what has gone well and what were the failures? I hope you will tell me and that I can learn from all of you during my coming visit to Korea. Can you sort out what remains from past traditions, what has been borrowed from abroad, and what has been created

9) [http://koreaherald.co.kr/news/2000/05/\\_02/200000509\\_0208.htm](http://koreaherald.co.kr/news/2000/05/_02/200000509_0208.htm).

10) <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~fredr/formost.htm#1.2.1>.

by Koreans on the basis of their own unique historical experiences? That is surely a fascinating story that needs to be told.

## THE FUTURE

But what of the coming half-century? What will we understand about public administration during the next forty to fifty years? Who can tell? Are we able now to make any predictions – or perhaps, more realistically, to identify possible alternatives? Can we at least identify some of the possibilities, the dangers and opportunities, that we ought to be thinking about as we enter the new century and millennium? At least, it will be strikingly different from the past.

Here let me draw on some thoughts I wrote up for a “postcard” to be used in an exercise sponsored by the Section for International and Comparative Administration (SICA) of the American Society for Public Administration. You will find my contribution at: *Globalization*.<sup>11)</sup> You might also reading about the perceptions of the years ahead offered by other participants in this exercise. You can find them at: SICA.<sup>12)</sup> Here is what I wrote:

A Postcard. The year 2000 marks not only the start of a new century and millennium, but also a turning point in world history that has, in fact, already started. Its dominant forces are well captured by the word globalization which symbolizes a fundamental transformation in the role of the post-Westphalian state. Public Administration as the study of governance in America, and Comparative Administration with its complementary focus on the administrative problems of new states, have both been state-centered, taking for granted the salience and sovereign role of independent states in a world-system of states. Regardless

of how the political institutions of these states were formed, we have assumed that they all required public bureaucracies able to attend to the most important needs of their citizens in an increasingly complicated age of industrialization and interdependence. That assumption has informed our analysis of the American system as though it were a prototype that could serve as an exemplar for all the new states born out of the collapse of the modern empires that had first occupied the world and then shredded it by their great inter-imperial wars.

The end of the “Cold War” actually brings this period in world history to a close. Although during the past half-century we learned to focus on the ideological aspects of the gigantic power struggles among the remaining super-powers, this focus blinded us to a more far-reaching transformation whose true character is only now beginning to become apparent. We have tended to assume that the collapse of the Soviet Union would launch a “new world order” in which democracy and capitalism would prevail and the United States would now, as the sole super power in the world, be enabled to play the role of peace maker and exemplar for the global development of a world system marked by continuously expanding prosperity, peace, and justice.

Unfortunately for Americans, this rosy illusion is scarcely shared by anyone in other countries of the world, and many Americans are themselves becoming disillusioned by the rise of transnational crime, ethnic protest movements, vast environmental challenges, floods of refugees and apparently insoluble nationalist conflicts and local wars. This disillusionment manifests itself in a new kind of isolationism well reflected in the unwillingness of Congress to pay its share of the costs of the United Nations even though we have come increasingly to depend on its umbrella to implement costly peace-keeping and humanitarian projects throughout the world. The technological revolution

11) <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~fredr/sica.htm>.

12) <http://www.uncc.edu/stwalker/sica/postcards>.

best exemplified by the INTERNET, the World Wide Web and the universal availability of person-to-person linkages for every imaginable purpose by means of instantaneous e-mail access to individuals located anywhere in the world. Increasingly states are side-lined as useful but not essential players in the games of world politics.

The INTERNET well symbolizes the trans-state networks that by-pass state authority and create new sodalities of interest and power most conspicuously manifested in the rise of gigantic multi-national corporations, often headquartered in tax havens and money laundering archipelagos of subvisible power, thereby undermining the capacity of responsible states to fund the necessary services that we have learned to count on as prerequisites of a civil society. The MNCs are augmented by powerful ethnic nations whose diasporas create global structures of power that challenge the fragile authority of new authoritarian regimes whose inability to maintain order and provide basic public services merely intensifies the anarchy, crime, and protest movements that make many of the new "quasi-states" essentially non-viable. The patent inability of contemporary states to cope effectively with a host of gigantic problems created by the interdependence of a global industrializing world system heightens momentous trends that students and practitioners of public administration alike need to think about, analyze and try to deal with. To think that we can continue to rely on stale and outmoded ways of understanding our situation in the world is, indeed, to blind ourselves to the emerging realities of globalization as an overwhelming reality.

To be more concrete, can we not visualize the new problems and possibilities that will confront us in the coming years, decades, century, and millennium? Let me offer a few suggestions.

### **The Decline of States**

The state as we have known it will scarcely wither away, but many of its functions and resources will be transformed and replaced. Increasingly, its powers will move to trans-state organizations created by governments and by non-governmental groups (both commercial and not-for profit in character). This makes the comparative study and administration of international organizations of all kinds increasingly fundamental to the survival of our global world system. Ferrel Heady in the recent SICA issue of PAR stressed the great importance for comparativists of paying serious attention to the organization design and functions of international organizations. I can only applaud and support his appeal: globalization now makes it even more urgent than it has been in the past. These trans-state organizations face huge problems that hinge on the activities of non-state actors of many kinds that states by themselves can no longer manage. Useful as administrative reform may be, it no longer offers solutions for many of the most urgent problems confronting our world today...

### **Sub-State Entities**

The authority of independent states will also, increasingly, devolve to sub-state authorities. This is already apparent in the United States in the insistent demands, both locally and in Congress, to devolve more functions to state, city, and local governments each of which, incidentally, has become increasingly active on its own authority in world affairs. The rising demand by indigenous peoples and other non-state nations for autonomy or independence as "nations within a nation" is encouraged by the United Nations and by many of our own citizens who have come to recognize the gross injustices that were historically imposed on the peoples we conquered and abused.

The new knowledge of how to organize, to use the INTERNET, to acquire weapons, and to coordinate

global struggles in a rapidly evolving network of ethnonational movements will make their demands increasingly irresistible. Public administration needs, therefore, to take into account an increasingly complex network of cross-cutting jurisdictions that go far beyond traditional notions of federalism to create what I have begun to think of as a “synarchic” world system.

### **Synarchy**

This is not the notion of a “world federation of states” which some of our idealists have long pressed for as an antidote to the anarchy of increasingly violent world wars. Indeed, any such federation would probably collapse from its own internal contradictions, or generate some kind of global authoritarianism. By contrast, a synarchic system involves a host of autonomous and self-powered organizational structures that are able to take form, manage their own affairs, negotiate with each other, sometimes engage in violent confrontations but often evolve workable compromises and mutual adaptations. In a way, this is just the kind of world system (order? disorder?) that we already have. We will not, I think, have any more world wars, and major clashes between “civilizations” is a fantasy based on the illusion that a new basis for gigantic power struggles is bound to emerge. We tend to remain preoccupied with conditions in a world that is already dead, but we are too close to the emergent new world system to discern its real shape.

I do not see any likelihood that any states in the world today will aggregate enough power and ambition to create new empires, no super states or mega-polities are likely to emerge. Instead, we are already living in a synarchic world (a world that links synthesis with anarchy. Many of our colleagues have already started to recognize and talk about this phenomenon under the heading of “globalization.”

My personal vision of the challenge facing comparative and international administration is to face up to the implications of such a system. How can the officers (military and civil) who are working in a host of trans-state, sub-state, and state organizations understand and master the tasks they need to perform? In the past, each of them has accepted a set of prescribed duties based on the policies of whatever organization, at each of these levels, provides the context for their employment. Rarely, however, will it be possible during the coming years for these “glocal” bureaucrats (the office holders of a wide range of global and local organizations — including states, as residual if battered strongholds of power) to focus on the tasks prescribed for them by formal political authorities. Instead, we need to recognize that office holders (bureaucrats) are themselves the bearers of a kind of personal sovereignty that compels them to take stock of their own actions in terms of a higher morality anchored in global accountability, and at the same time to become increasingly aware of the competing sensitivities and obligations of the officers of other organizations with which they must interact.

In such a context, office holders are also power holders — their interests and capabilities interface with a wide range of overlapping and competing organizations and agencies, at all levels. Whether or not our synarchic world will survive and satisfy the basic needs of a rapidly growing world population, providing for the survival of a global environment that has become increasingly threatened by the mining of resources and pervasive pollution, is a question specialists on Public Administration, both in academia and government, now need to think about most seriously...

“We are now on the hinge of a major transition in world history. We need to think more profoundly about the fundamental changes this transition will necessitate in the way organizations at all levels, throughout the world, will have to manage their

activities. Among these changes will be far-reaching transformations in the design and structure of the American system of government. This means that we can no longer take our own forms of governance for granted as a kind of safe haven for orthodoxy or a model for others to follow — instead, we need to examine ourselves as well as the rest of the world in a global framework that is rapidly replacing the fading world of Westphalia. We are, indeed, on the threshold of a new era that compels us to think and act with far more imaginative creativity than ever before.”

### **A New Korea**

Perhaps these sweeping generalizations intended primarily for consideration by an American audience may not strike Koreans as especially relevant. However, let me speculate about a possible outcome of the coming North/ South talks in Pyongyang. What kind of a duo-national politico-administrative system is likely to evolve? Perhaps there will be nothing different — the talks may end fruitlessly and the status quo will continue. However, I am hopeful of positive results. Perhaps it will involve a renewed consciousness of Korea as a nation, even though it has been partitioned into two states as a result of impinging global forces created by the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The end of the Cold War has opened new possibilities for Koreans, though they seem to have taken a long time to mature.

I doubt, however, that these results will take the form of a reunified Korea, following the German model. Instead, there will be a continuing duopoly, a political duplex in which two states with rival constitutional norms co-exist and interact. The impermeable DMZ frontier will be replaced by international boundaries resembling those that now exist between the United States and Mexico. Movements of workers, capital, information, and

goods across this border will increase though closely guarded and fraught with controversy. They will have profound influences on the lives of citizens in both Korean states. Perhaps ultimately, as leaders and political systems evolve in both North and South, something like the U.S./Canada border might evolve in which free movements in both directions are permitted. Whether and if such a duplex state system can and will evolve into a unified nation-state may not be known for generations — I do not see how it could happen soon.

Whatever the future may hold for Koreans, the North/South question will surely play an important part — and it will not be a purely intra-national matter. Instead, relations with neighboring states — especially China, Japan, Russia, and the U.S. — need to be factored into the equation. Moreover, these changes will not just involve states based on the Westphalian model. Instead, there will be a growing volume of networks based on individuals and groups, linked by the INTERNET and capable of autonomous action without paying much attention to state boundaries. Although many participants in these networks will be private citizens, corporations, and non-governmental associations, public officials will also be actively involved. Such networks will radically transform the existing pattern of hierarchic relations between agencies based on traditional assumptions. Instead, it will be much easier for individuals to reach out to others whose interests overlap, especially where cooperation, competition or conflicts may occur. Hopefully these networks will facilitate the making of agreements that can promote integration and cooperation, not only within states like Korea, but also between individuals in many states, including all Korea's neighbors.

In such a context there will be important changes in the basic goals, practices and ideas that will be required for effective public administration. I am optimistic enough to hope that these changes will

be beneficial for all concerned, and certainly University programs focused on public administration need to play an important role in creating, using, and evaluating these new possibilities. I would hope that South Korea, and especially SNU, its Public Administration school, and all members of SAPA, will play a constructive and important role in these developments. To give structure to your discourse, may I suggest that you create a Korean counterpart to the SICA-sponsored Web Conference?<sup>13)</sup>

By this means any member — or anyone interested? — can contribute on the INTERNET to a continuing discussion of salient issues. Unfortunately the SICA model has only recently been created and has not yet been much used — however, you can find a contribution from me if you care to look. Actually, I suspect that you could also enter the SICA-sponsored conference if you wanted to do so. The American Society for Public Administration has also established a general conference program for all of its members — you

can find it at ASPA.<sup>14)</sup> It is much more developed than the SICA page, but of course its focus is on American Public Administration, whereas SICA's interest in comparative studies is more relevant for anyone in Korea. Nevertheless, it suggests categories and items that you might find useful in your own work.

Interestingly, ASPA has a number of international affiliations and claims to have one for Korea, via KAPA. You will find the information posted at International.<sup>15)</sup> Unfortunately, the link for KAPA does not work. Perhaps this relationship can be invigorated and I'd be glad to help any way I can.

No doubt during the coming years, the INTERNET will provide networking capabilities that will help innovators seeking to strengthen administrative practices in all governments — and South Korea could surely be a leader. I am sad that I will not be able to see these new realities, but many of you will, and I wish you all success and happiness, with much aloha from Hawaii.

---

13) <http://askew.fsu.edu:080/~SICA>.

---

14) <http://memberconnections.com/aspa>.

15) <http://www.uncc.edu/stalker/sica/links.htm#international.affiliates>.