

Improving Governmental Transparency in Korea: Toward Institutionalized and ICT-Enabled Transparency*

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to examine how governmental transparency has improved in Korea. To this end, the author examines the periodic characteristics of governmental transparency while also analyzing the information that each administration in Korea has produced. Also investigated are institutional arrangements for accessing this information and the adoption of ICTs in government. It was not until the democratic transition of 1987 that the transparency of the government began to improve in Korea. The key characteristic of the transparency policy after democratization was the pursuit of the simultaneous progress of institutionalized and ICT-enabled governmental transparency. Citizens' accessibility to and the disclosure of public information were institutionalized. Furthermore, ICTs enable citizens to access such information more efficiently through non-stop operations and one-click services. In the course of establishing the institutions to improve governmental transparency, however, executive dominance and bureaucrats' resistance to governmental transparency were the major challenges.

Keywords: transparency, governmental transparency in Korea, institutionalization, e-government, democratization

INTRODUCTION

Transparency has become a widespread nostrum of 'good governance' in many different contexts today. Not only in developing countries but also in developed countries, transparency has emerged as a significant concept in the public sector and is regarded

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as a fundamental value for realizing other administrative values, including integrity, fairness, accountability, and anti-corruption (Mudacumura, 2014; Kosack and Fung, 2014; Meijer, 2012; Hollyer et al. 2011; Hood and Heald, 2006; Armstrong, 2005; Stiglitz, 2003; Park, 2001).

More specifically, emerging issues with regard to transparency with an emphasis on the context of developing countries include the following. First, the institutionalization of enhancing governmental transparency should be examined. It has been argued that developing countries suffer from a weak institutional capacity when it comes to overseeing integrity and transparency (Lowry, 2013; Armstrong, 2005). This weakness leads to a low level of compliance/enforcement of policy measures to improve transparency (Vishwanath and Kaufmann, 1999). Therefore, issues pertaining to the creation of stronger institutional arrangements to increase transparency should be addressed.

Second, the adoption of information and communications technologies (ICTs) to increase governmental transparency should be examined. It is believed that the adoption of ICTs is one of the most effective ways to disseminate government information and to create a more transparent government in the digital age (Bertot et al., 2010; Meijer, 2009). Therefore, a strategy and process for ICTs adoption to realize the potential to improve transparency should be considered.

Finally, various macro- and micro-factors which influence improvements to transparency should be examined given the historical background and the characteristics of public administration systems in developing countries (Jung et al., 2012; Meijer, 2012). It is natural that we should understand what factors can influence transparency when designing effective policies to improve governmental transparency. In finding the causal relationships between governmental transparency and its possible influential factors, we should consider the various contextual factors in each country. For example, it has been indicated that a colonial legacy and experiences related to a dictatorship in the developing countries explain in part the concentration of power in the state and the unfettered discretion of public officials, which are major obstacles preventing an improvement of governmental transparency (Al-Jurf, 1999). Given these contextual factors specific to developing countries, more fundamental issues of determining the major agents to overcome these obstacles within the public sector in developing countries should be approached.

In this respect, Korea can be considered as a good benchmark in examining how governmental transparency can be enhanced in the context of the developing countries. Governmental transparency has rapidly improved in Korea since the democratic transition in 1987. Various institutionalizations to improve governmental transparency, including the Official Information Disclosure Act, a Korean version of the Freedom of

Information (FOI) Act, contributed significantly toward enhanced transparency (Jung et al., 2012; Yoon, 2010; Jang and Song, 2008; Park, 2001). In addition, various e-government systems and government initiatives for the digitalization of government have been devised to increase not only efficiency but also transparency in government (Song, 2004). Furthermore, active civic participation based on democratization has functioned as a political driver to overcome obstacles preventing improved governmental transparency while also working to speed up the enactment of laws and regulations related to governmental transparency. Despite these efforts and their achievements to some extent, the level of governmental transparency has not been evaluated as satisfactory. The author believes that these types of experiences in Korea for improving governmental transparency can give good lessons and provide important policy implications for many developing countries.

In this vein, the main purpose of this study is to examine how governmental transparency has improved in Korea. More specifically, the author examines the periodic characteristics of governmental transparency while also analyzing the information that each administration in Korea has produced. Also investigated are institutional arrangements for accessing this information and the adoption of ICTs in government, which contribute significantly to enhancing government transparency. To this end, this study divides Korean governments into two periods: before and after democratization in the late 1980s. Based on these analyses, the factors which influence improvements to governmental transparency and the implications for developing countries given the experience of Korea will be presented. The primary information sources for this study include a wealth of archival information, including white papers, newspaper articles, and academic journal articles, as well as policy reports published by other concerned authorities.

This paper is organized as follows. In section two, we review the theoretical background of transparency, including its definitions and constructs, the elements of transparency policy measurements, and factors which influence the level of transparency. In sections three and four, the author examines changes of government transparency and the characteristics of policy to improve governmental transparency after democratization in Korea. Finally, the authors conclude this paper with some evaluations and policy implications for other developing countries.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Definition and Constructs of Governmental Transparency

Governmental transparency is defined as “the ability to find out what is going on inside government” (Piotrowski and Ryzin, 2007). Similarly but with more of an emphasis on information about government, it can be defined that “reliable, relevant and timely information about the activities of government is available to the public” (Kondo, 2002; 7). This type of the definition of governmental transparency focuses on letting citizens know government operations and policymaking and giving them access to a variety of information kept by the government such that the public can utilize them. In the political realm, for example, transparency is identified as “enabling citizens to learn what governments are up to through information provided by the government” (Florini 1999).¹ This approach emphasizes not merely opening up the information itself but the opening of the overall operational processes, not only transparency in the outcomes but transparency in processes and the organizations themselves as well (Meijer 2009).

Governmental transparency in the context of freedom of information can be seen as a basic human right. It is a basic need of people to acquire information from as many sources as possible to expand their knowledge horizons and reveal their knowledge through their personalities. Therefore, people should be able to determine their information sources and the subject of the information on their own. From the perspective of democratic governance, the history of democracy can be understood as a process of struggling to earn information rights, or the right to be better informed. Democracy is difficult to build without more information, reaching a state of being better informed, and allowing public opinions to be built on the foundation. Moreover, governmental transparency crosscuts many of the dimensions of democratic governance, such as accountability, participation and representativeness (Piotrowski and Ryzin, 2007; Birkinshaw 2006).

In the context of developing countries, transparency has been viewed as a key factor for building good governance. A higher level of governmental transparency is also essential to economic development in developing countries: it improves resource

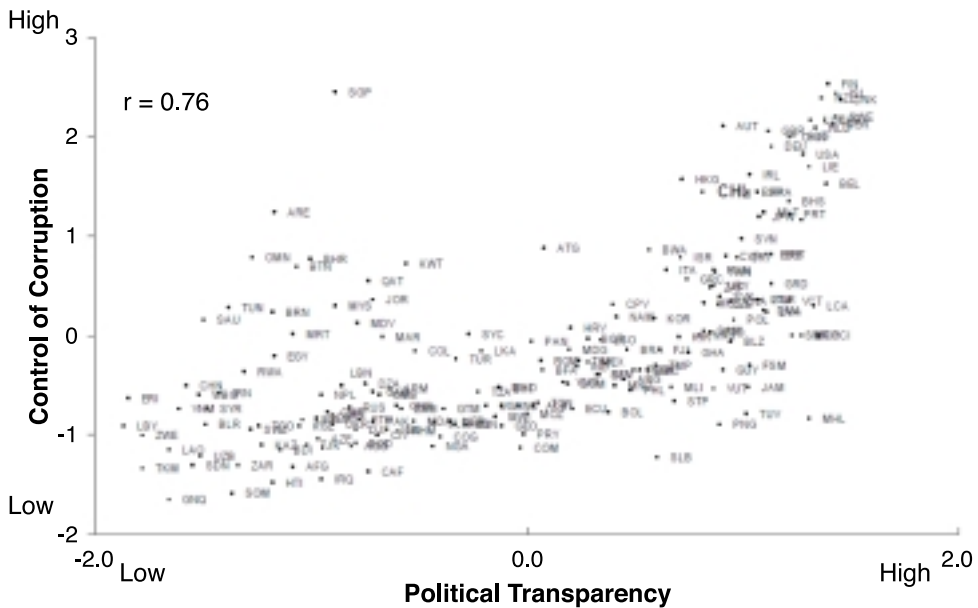
1. In the cases of economics and finance area, it is defined very broadly as “a process by which information about existing conditions, decisions and actions is made accessible, visible and understandable” (Working Group, 1998). In a similar context, transparency is described as “the increased flow of timely and reliable economic, social, and political information” (Vishwanath and Kaufmann, 1999).

allocation, enhances efficiency and increases the prospect of growth. Information imperfections in markets increase transaction costs and give rise to market failures. Though market failures hamper the working of all markets, they especially affect capital markets (Vishwanath and Kaufmann, 1999).

With empirical analysis on the relationship between transparency, national income levels and the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), Bellver and Kaufmann (2005) show that countries that rank higher in wealth are also transparent,² also show that more transparent countries appear to be more competitive in the global market. More specifically, taking the establishment of a business as an example of an administrative procedure, they find that a greater degree of economic/institutional transparency is associated with lower costs to register a business. According to their analysis on the relationship between transparency and cost to register a business, in low transparent countries more than 80 per cent of income per capita is needed to register a business, compare to the 13 percent in countries with high levels of transparency on average.

In addition, enhancing transparency can effectively reduce corruption, as shown in Figure 1 below, as well as other dysfunctions in government. It can make bureaucratic corruption more risky and make it easier to provide good incentives to public officials and the ease selection of honest and efficient individuals for public service. Transparency

Figure 1. Control of Corruption and Political Transparency



Source: Bellver and Kaufmann (2005)

can also help reduce political corruption by increasing the overall level of public accountability. Further, it can facilitate cooperative behavior instead of opportunistic rent-seeking, helping to maintain norms of integrity and trust (Kolstad and Wiig, 2009).

From this perspective, government transparency has two types of constructs: information and access (Park, 2001).³ The first construct of governmental transparency is information. It consists of two elements: quantity and quality. Information quantity refers to the amount and coverage of information disclosed by government. In terms of quantity, transparent government should provide the following information in principle: (1) all published materials or materials already in their possession, (2) all policies that could be released publicly, (3) all information created or collected on a statutory basis, (4) all documents that the public may be required to complete, and (5) corporate documentation in which the public would be interested (Hernon, 1998: 427; cited from Park, 2001). The role of media, IT, and NGOs are important in expanding the range of information available to citizens.

Information quality refers to the truthfulness, timeliness, and relevance of the information provided (Vishwanath and Kaufmann, 1999). Information should be of good quality and reliable, timely, complete, fair, consistent and represented in clear and simple terms. Standards for quality must be ensured, possibly through verification by external agencies or auditors or standards-setting organizations. Consistency with regard to the use of processes to obtain information and in the formats of the information disseminated ensures comparability and so allows assessments of changes over time. Dishonest reporting is deterred by the presence of various “watchdog” institutions ranging from professional accountants or agencies, credit bureaus and Congressional institutions, an independent press, stakeholder feedback, to even academic researchers.

The other construct of governmental transparency is access to information (Vishwanath and Kaufmann, 1999). It consists of the procedures, facilities, and methods needed for increased convenience of information requests. Government information should be available easily, widely, and equitably so that citizens can easily access and grasp it. Laws and regulations ensure, at least in principle, that information remains

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2. The correlation between gross national income per capita in US dollars and the overall transparency index is 0.72, which is in good agreement with earlier studies on governance that found a positive correlation between institutional governance and cross-country differences in income per capita (Bellver and Kaufmann, 2005).
 3. The two constructs, information and access, are mutually dependent on each other to improving transparency. In a certain respect, information is a substantial part of transparency, while access is instrumental. Without true and relevant information, transparency cannot be attained only by good access, and vice versa.

available to all. In part, this is aided by institutions and venues that facilitate its flow, including media such as newspapers, radio, TV, public information notices, the Internet, and word of mouth.

Policies to Improve Governmental Transparency

Based on the discussions of the definitions and the constructs of governmental transparency, governmental transparency policies can be analyzed with institutional arrangements and informational channels, which are associated with acquiring the correct information and facilitating the accessibility of the information kept by government agencies.

First, building institutional arrangements related to governmental transparency is especially important for improving transparency because such institutions can define the authorities, accessibility levels and scopes of the openness of public information. Moreover, they have an influence on the level of transparency by constraining actors during policy processes, functioning as structural factors that influence the interactions among them, and mediating the impact of information technologies and various environmental factors (Fountain, 2007; Snellen, 2005).

In particular, these institutional arrangements should be emphasized when discussing governmental transparency considering the fact that a government in power has various incentives to avoid the provision of information (Florini, 1999). The specific type of information tends to cause governments to be reluctant to provide information, not only to citizens but also even to public officials who belong to different public organizations. This occurs because the disclosure of such information indicates a power shift from the government to newly informed citizens and public officials (Park, 2001). This is the very reason why more than 80 countries now enact some form of FOI laws or regimes to define citizens' right to know and their accessibility to public information (Piotrowski, 2007). These types of laws and regulations give citizens the right to access information from government agencies. Under these laws, agencies must disclose any information that is requested—unless that information is protected from public disclosure.

In addition to enacting FOI laws, innovative institutional reforms for strengthening an enforcement system that promotes monitoring, improves accountability and punishes offenders are required because transparency cannot be implemented effectively when compliance is weak. Therefore, innovative regulatory reforms may be necessary, devised through cooperation among government, the private sector, and civil society, to encourage greater voluntary information disclosure and promote enforcement (Vishwanath and Kaufmann, 1999).

Second, implementing effective and efficient information channels is another significant element because it can influence the quality and quantity of the public information that citizens can access as well as the time, scope and convenience of the deliberation activities concerning public information. In this regard, one of the most important factors for building information channels of public information is the adoption of ICTs in public organizations (Bertot et al., 2010; von Waldenberg, 2004; Bhatnagar, 2003).

The adoption of ICTs has reduced the costs of transferring and evaluating information, allowing for sophisticated and rapid dissemination of data and empirical analysis while also increasing the quantity of the information dissemination. The activity of e-government building has also contributed to enhancing governmental transparency, especially through public information disclosures and the dissemination of government information to the public.

More specifically, government information can be provided through the e-government systems and web pages of government agencies for citizens to their offices, living rooms and other places ubiquitously wherever they want, without requiring them to visit a government agency, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, through non-stop operations and one-click services. In addition, two-way communications through websites are well-equipped on all e-government systems. Agencies in charge of e-government operate cyber offices for civil applications in the Q&A and FAQ forms, as well as other services in order to handle solicited feedback and suggestions and undertake consultations, as illustrated in Table 1 (Kim et al., 2008; Song, 2004). ICTs can also be adopted for providing information on the handling of internal business in central/local

Table 1. Factors of Governmental Transparency through e-Government

Factor	Means	Examples
Expanding competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increasing participants – Expanding time and space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increasing service providers and demanders – Expanding service hours and offices
Reducing discretion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cutting facial contacts – Permitting appeals and petitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reducing office visits, permitting FAQs and Q&A inquiries – Introducing appeals procedures
Electronic transaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Innovating process – Reducing paperwork – Information sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – E-transactions for all processes – Paperwork standardization practices – Inter-agency information sharing
Information openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Providing website services – Disclosing civil applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Information disclosure through websites – Providing ongoing civil applications on the Internet and e-government systems

Source: Song (2004: 109)

governments, which promotes better governmental transparency while also controlling corruption (Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes 2010).

Influential Factors on Governmental Transparency with Emphasis on Democratic Factors

Different researchers have noted different factors which influence governmental transparency. Several empirical studies have examined factors affecting governmental transparency. Some scholars have focused on macro-factors of governmental transparency. Hood (2006) attempts to answer these questions by combining the concepts of action and structure and then reflecting the notions of “the power of particular interests, i.e., power politics;” “reflecting widely distributed attitudes and beliefs, i.e., cultural shift interpretations;” and “adaptations to prevailing technological and social conditions for governments and many other types of organizations in the contemporary age, i.e., functional explanations.” With regard to these factors on cases of institutionalization for improving transparency in Korea, Jung et al. (2012) consider the macro-factors of democratization, globalization, and digitalization as driving forces to promote the institutionalization of improved transparency.⁴

Cross-national comparative studies demonstrate that fiscal transparency in government is highly correlated with following factors: corruption; democracy; development; institutional quality such as government effectiveness, the rule of law, and control of corruption; political competition; inflation; and natural resources such as oil and ores (Heuty & Carlitz, 2009; Andreula, Chong, & Guillén, 2009; Bastida & Benito, 2007). Existing research mainly focuses on cross-national differences, but little is known about the variation in governmental transparency of subnational and local governments within specific countries (Ma, 2012).

Those who pay attention to factors external to government emphasize that the

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4. More specifically, they argue that “democratization in Korea changed citizens’ values with regard to the government’s degree of transparency and increased their call for transparency. As a result, politicians have doubled their effort to respond to such calls. Globalization spread policy ideas and brought in international pressures. For instance, Korea made an effort to meet the global standards to join the OECD in 1995 and to respond to IMF’s call for coercive isomorphism in the wake of the Asian financial crisis in 1997. Advances in science and technology, which can be also labeled as an ICT revolution, significantly contributed to improving transparency in Korea as well. With the advent of the information society came the development of the Internet and e-government, which drastically cut the costs of accumulating, searching for, and distributing information and ultimately facilitated better information disclosure” (Jung et al., 2012).

values and characteristics of democratic political systems, such as the pressure and demand of citizens, enterprises, and their representatives, are crucial forces that push government to provide open information (Piotrowski & Van Ryzin, 2007). For example, civil society groups also play a key role in pressuring the government to provide open information and to enact FOI laws (Jung et al., 2012; Banisar, 2006). Citizen participatory budgeting has been evaluated as effective for increasing the level of fiscal transparency, as citizens are actively engaged in government budgeting reviews, pressure from enterprises, particularly from those engaged in international trade and foreign direct investment (FDI), also pull governments toward open administrative processes while also facilitating their businesses (Ma, 2009).

The other external factor related to improving governmental transparency is the power of the legislative branch in a democratized political system. “By resolution, investigation, and the threat of even more punitive sanctions, Congress has repeatedly asserted its belief that executive officials should not be allowed to withhold documents and testimony at their own discretion (Rourke, 1960).” Legislative oversight has been regarded as a robust mechanism institutionalized to checkmate the excesses of the executive arm of government and government agencies to curb waste in governance, corruption and absolutism in the exercise of political power, and to enhance governmental transparency.

As an internal governmental factor concerning improvements to governmental transparency, the roles and characteristics of highly ranked leadership have been stressed. Particularly, strategic leadership theorists emphasize the importance of upper echelons whose background characteristics largely explain strategic actions and the performance of organizations (Ma and Wu, 2011; Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Whether the leaders acquiesce and provide support matters significantly for governmental transparency. Evidence shows that city executives’ tenures in office and career backgrounds explain a large part of the variation in environmental transparency (Lorentzen et al., 2010).

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENTAL TRANSPARENCY IN KOREA

Following the constructs and the indicators of governmental transparency presented in the previous section, we examine the historical changes in governmental transparency in Korea in this section. Specifically, we compare and contrast the levels of governmental transparency before and after democratization with the following indicators: (1) the quantity of government information, which can be measured with the number of presi-

dential records in each administration; “watchdog” institutions inside and outside of the executive branch, such as (2) the National Assembly and (3) the Board of Audit and Inspection (BAI); (4) laws enacted to improve governmental transparency, such as FOI laws; and (5) e-government services which contribute to improving governmental transparency.⁵

Quantity of Government Information

The key characteristics of the Korean government before democratization in the late 1980s have been regarded as state intervention in the market for economic development and authoritarian integration based on an anti-communism approach (Cho, 2000). Korea maintained strongly state-centered relations with civil society after the founding of the Republic. Its strong stateness was based on an over-developed state apparatus which enacted coercive laws and a type of order that effectively controlled civil society. In addition, there are various intermediate organizations that enhance the capability of the state. This state dominance over civil society led to the deplorable custom of putting government officials above people (Jung, 2005).

Under this authoritarian governance, a culture of secrecy was much more dominant than that of transparency as a guiding value of public administration and policy. Of course, values related to transparency, including the right to know, participation, and freedom of information could not be realized under the string of strong authoritarian governments at that time. The Korean Constitution does not have clauses that clearly define people’s right to know. Governments strictly controlled access to public information and only released information which was beneficial to maintaining the regimes and to promoting mass mobilizations (Jang and Song, 2008; Im, 2008).

In this situation, the secrecy of the bureaucracy was strengthened in the top-down and closed public administrative systems. Government bureaucracy monopolized public information and had a tendency to handle in strict confidence even general information which could be made freely available to the public (Park, 2008). For example, details on corruption scandals in which public officials were engaged were handled as confidential. Moreover, even information on government initiatives and programs which could have had major influences on people’s daily lives, such as taxation policies, were kept

5. Again, the two construct, information and access, are mutually dependent on each other for enhancing transparency. In addition, each indicator presented above is clearly associated with both information (quality and quantity) and access to improve governmental transparency. This explains why the author analyzes the changes in governmental transparency with the above indicators.

secret before their official announcement to the public (Ahn, 1987).

The culture of secrecy influenced the management of governmental records negatively and was related to a low level of transparency. Records on public administration and their preservation were simply perceived as a means of improving administrative efficiency under the authoritarian regimes. The organization of the Korean National Archives was founded in 1969, but the management of the records under the authoritarian regimes was mainly for the seamless dissemination and control of administrative work attendant on the process of governing activities and for proof of outcomes of administrative work, not for transparency or the people's right to know (Yi, 2003); it is not that the records were not created at all but that the presidents disposed of or took out materials that could be used against them at the end of their terms (Jung et al., 2012).

As illustrated in Table 2 below, there were fewer presidential records left by the authoritarian regimes before 1988 than those left by democratic regimes after 1988, even though the presidents' years in office during the authoritarian regimes were longer than those of the democratic regimes. In addition, the total number of presidential

Table 2. Number of Presidential Records Left by Each Administration in Korea

President	Tenure	Years in office	Total number of official records left	Official documents left	Audiovisual documentation	Administrative Data sets	Presidential Web Record	Publications and Books
Rhee Syngman	1948-1960	12	82,340	17,254	65,068			
Park Chung-hee	1961-1979	18	44,023	38,748	4,698			77
Chun Doo-hwan	1980-1988	8	44,872	36,631	7,713			31
Rho Tae-woo	1988-1993	5	32,085	30,817	904			14
Kim Young-sam	1993-1998	5	81,197	54,549	21,810			2,348
Kim Dae-jung	1998-2003	5	742,054	293,319	2,535	30,770	411,876	1,534
Roh Moo-hyun	2003-2008	5	7,553,358	1,167,175	732,440	658,640	4,971,158	20,359
Lee Myung-bak	2008-2013	5	10,879,864	1,028,953	1,407,352	3,298,129	5,134,137	7,797

Source: Homepage of National Archives of Korea (www.archives.go.kr) (Retrieved on April 13, 2014)

records left after each administration has drastically increased as democracy had been consolidated. More specifically, only 5,609 official records were left per year during the Chun administration, but 16,239 records were left during Kim Young-sam administration, 148,410 during the Kim Dae-jung administration, and 1,510,671 during the Roh Moo-hyun administration. This considerable increase in the number of presidential records, including official documents, can be interpreted as evidence of the enhancement of governmental transparency.

Furthermore, various types of records began to be produced after democratization. More specifically, numerous administrative data sets and presidential web records have been produced since the Kim Dae-jung administration. These types of data appear to have widened access to government information and enhanced the quality of information that citizens can access, as different types of information and data can provide citizens with different types of tools with which to understand public administration and policies.

Institutions of the National Assembly Related to Improving Governmental Transparency

With democratization since the late 1980s, the National Assembly in Korea has been granted more power to investigate government policies and administration. This power shift to the National Assembly can be interpreted as proof that there have been major improvements in governmental transparency regarding accessibility to information as well as in the quantity and quality of information available to the public. There have been several institutional changes to expand the role and power of this representative institution, as discussed below (Jung, 2005; Park, 2000).

First, the institutional foundations upon which the National Assembly exerted control of the bureaucracy's secretive manners in its undertaking of administrative practices started to be strengthened with democratization. For example, the right of the president to dissolve the Assembly was deleted by the ninth revision of the Constitution in 1987. In addition, the legislative branch's authority to conduct administrative inspections and investigations, which had been repealed 15 years earlier by the constitutional referendum of 1972, was re-established in the revision in 1987 (Jung, 2005). With this restored power, the National Assembly was able to oversee and scrutinize the administrative practices more effectively, as shown in Table 3 below. Furthermore, a U.S.-style independent counsel system was also introduced in 1999. The system of an independent special counsel has been evaluated as having powerful effects on the disclosure of information concealed by the government, and especially in clearing top government officials of suspicion of being involved in a bribery scandal (Park, 2001).

Table 3. National Assembly's Inspection and Investigation Conducted in Korea

National Assembly	Year	Inspections		Investigations	Independent Councils	Total
		General	Special			
1st	1948-1950	1	0	15	–	16
2nd	1950-1954	4	2	41	–	47
3rd	1954-1958	3	10	64	–	77
4th	1958-1960	2	1	14	–	17
5th(L/U)	1960-1961	1/1	1/1	11/5	–	13/7
6th	1963-1967	3	0	12	–	15
7th	1967-1971	4	5	8	–	17
8th	1971-1972	2	0	1	–	3
9th	1973-1979	0	–	0	–	0
10th	1979-1980	–	–	0	–	0
11th	1981-1985	–	–	0	–	0
12th	1985-1988	–	–	0	–	0
13th	1988-1992	4	–	4	–	8
14th	1992-1996	4	–	4	–	8
15th	1996-2000	4	–	5	2	11
16th	2000-2004	4	–	3	3	10
17th	2004-2008	4	–	2	3	9
18th	2008-2012	4	–	3	3	10
19th	2012-Present	2	–	4	1	7

Source: Jung (2005); National Assembly (2008; 1988); Database on legislative information established by the National Assembly

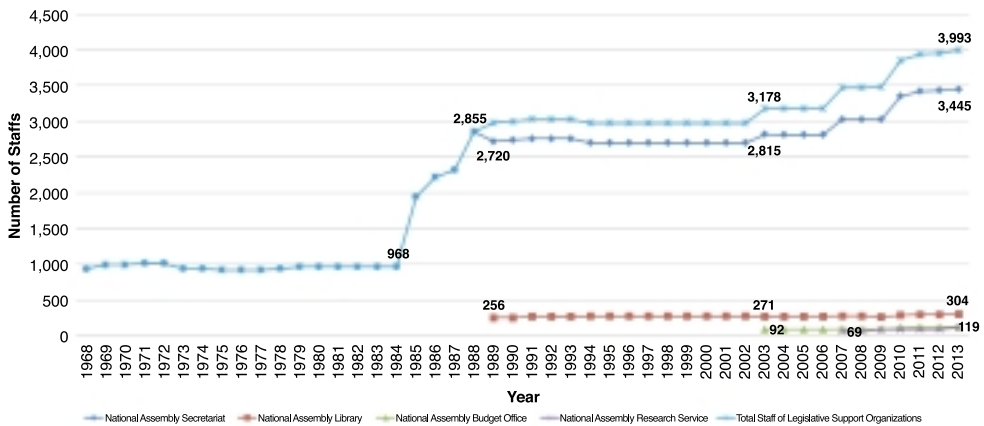
Note: L and U denote the Lower and Upper House, respectively.

Second, the National Assembly Law, revised in 2000, provided that for the appointment of important positions in the executive branch, such as the Prime Minister and Chairman of the BAI as well as the judicial branches, the president must obtain approval from the National Assembly by holding a confirmation hearing. During the process of these hearings, detailed information on the candidates' careers, areas of expertise, and capability to carry out the job required by the positions are disseminated to the public. In addition, the law prescribes several other institutional arrangements, whereby the Assembly can approve budgets more transparently, such as remaining in

session throughout the year (Jung, 2005). On the one hand, these institutionalization processes, in this case the personnel hearings and process of budget approval in the National Assembly, function as a mechanism or a venue that enhances government transparency as well as an example that demonstrates how the National Assembly is able now to place progressively more limitations on presidential power.

Third, several administrative apparatuses to assist the Assembly in enacting legislation, performing administrative oversight duties and scrutinizing finances, have been institutionalized. The National Assembly Budget Office⁶ and the National Assembly Research Service,⁷ which were modelled on the Congressional Budget Office and Congressional Research Service of the U.S. Congress, have grown not only in terms of the number of personnel, as shown in Figure 5, but also in the scope of their duty and expertise (Kim and Park, 2009). Not only the National Assembly members, but also the personnel of these apparatuses in the National Assembly have served as the “watchdogs” of the workings of the executive branch while analyzing governmental policy and administration and publishing their reports even to the public, which in turn contributes to enhancing government transparency.

Figure 2. Growth of the Number of Employees in Legislative Supporting Apparatuses



Source: Kim and Park (2009); Author's calculation based on data from the decrees of each apparatuses retrieved from the National Center for Legislation Information (www.law.go.kr)

6. As a fiscal institution to support the activities of the legislative body, founded in 2003 based on the National Assembly Act, the National Assembly Budget Office aims to enhance the efficiency of the National Assembly by keeping the government in check and monitoring its operation of national finances.
7. The major duty of the NARS, established in 2007 is to address requests from members or committees of the National Assembly by undertaking research and analysis.

Activities of the Board of Audit and Inspection

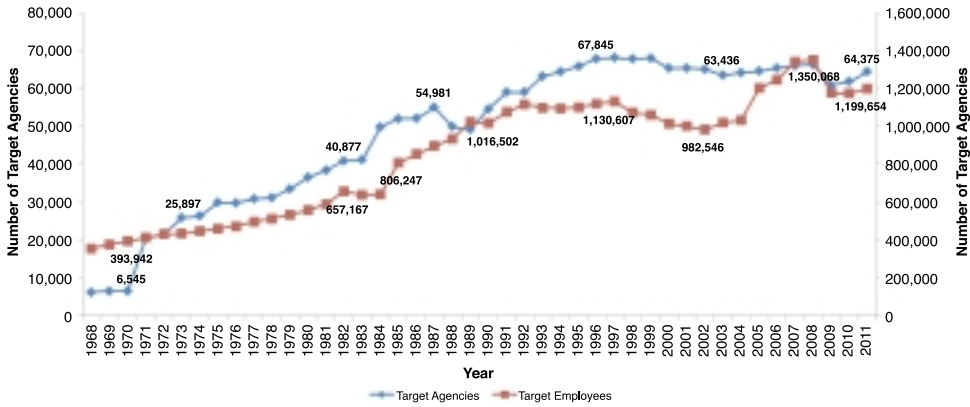
In spite of the widespread secrecy of the administrative system during the authoritarian regimes, however, some administrative measures and procedures for collecting and sharing government information were institutionalized at those times. The main purposes of establishing these types of measures and procedures were not to realize democratic values such as the right to know but to maintain the hold of power by the bureaucracy in a top-down manner to achieve internal efficiency and effectiveness of government policies.⁸ However, they resulted in contributing to the enhancement of governmental transparency.

The establishment of the Board of Audit and Inspection (BAI) can be seen as an example of such an enhancement.⁹ The major activities of the BAI since its establishment have been audits and inspections. An audit refers to the activity of the verification of the final accounts of the State, provincial governments and government-invested organizations. Its results are reported to the president and to the National Assembly. An inspection is an examination of the works of government agencies and the duties of their employees (BAI, 2008). The number of agencies and government employees that should be audited and inspected by the BAI has increased, as illustrated in Figure 3, as has the number of disciplinary actions and the number of employees subjected to

8. In this regard, Ahn (1987) criticizes that the BAI was not fully autonomous from the external pressure under the authoritarian regimes because the BAI strengthened the inspection and audit activities in the years when then president paid attention to the corruptive behavior and malfunctions of the public agencies and employees in public sector.

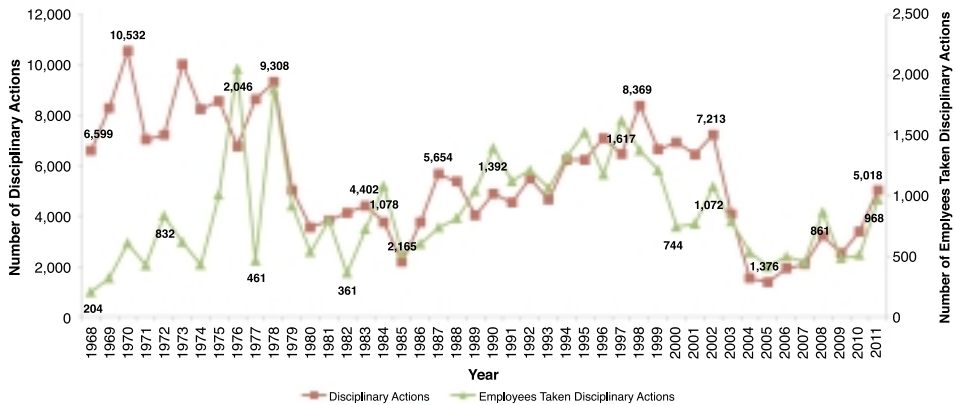
9. Very soon after the Republic of Korea was established in 1948, the Board of Audit was founded under the president as the supreme audit institution pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution of 1948, to carry out audits of the central government, local governments, government-invested organizations, and other organizations as prescribed by law. The Commission of Inspection was also established under the president in accordance with the provisions of the Government Organization Act of 1948 to supervise and inspect the duties of the employees of central and local governments, government-invested organizations, and other organizations prescribed by law. The Commission was renamed the Commission of Supervision and Control during the period of 1955 to 1960 and was then reorganized under the Prime Minister with its original name, the Commission of Inspection, in accordance with the Commission of Inspection Act of 1961. Audits by the Board of Audit and inspections by the Commission of Inspection were in many cases so closely related that a line could not be clearly distinguished between them. Taking this into account, the revised Constitution of 1962 prescribed the merger of these two organizations into the current Board of Audit and Inspection (BAI), which was established on March 20, 1963, under the Board of Audit and Inspection Act of 1963 (BAI, 2008).

Figure 3. The Number of Target Agencies and Employees of the BAI's Audits and Inspections



Source: Ahn (1987) and *Annual Report on Audits and Inspections* (each year)

Figure 4. The Number of Disciplinary Actions and Employees Subject to Disciplinary Measures by the BAI



Source: Ahn (1987) and *Annual Report on Audits and Inspections* (each year)

disciplinary actions by the BAI, as depicted in Figure 4. These activities contributed to enhancing governmental transparency and anti-corruption efforts through their examinations of the relevance and the purposefulness of the works of government agencies and the lawfulness of the administrative actions taken by public employees.

In addition, the BAI has carried out the monitoring of whether public services were successfully delivered to the service target groups. Since the 1980s, the BAI has conducted performance evaluations of major government initiatives as well as evaluations of these processes. The policy information produced through these activities of the

BAI has been fed back to the policy formulation and implementation phases and used for giving rewards and meting out penalties to the public officials linked to the initiatives (Ahn, 1987; Rho, 1987).¹⁰ The establishment of the BAI and the institutionalization of the audits and inspections have been evaluated as beneficial as they make public organizations and public servants more accountable and increase governmental transparency (Park, 2008; Ahn, 1987).

Laws Enacted to Improve Government Transparency¹¹

After democratization, enactment of the laws to guarantee accessibility to public information and the adoption of ICT as a public information delivery channel were simultaneously carried out. The Constitutional Court, which was installed in accordance with the ninth amendment of the Constitution in 1987, put out a ruling that legally recognized the ‘right to know’ on a case regarding a request to peruse litigation records¹² (Han 2002). In addition, more examples of institutionalization have been conducted aggressively to define citizens’ accessibility to public information. These efforts have enhanced governmental transparency, as illustrated in Table 4 (Jung et al., 2012; Yoon 2010).

More specifically, several major institutions which were enacted during this period to improve governmental transparency have been considered. Examples are as follows: (1) the Official Information Disclosure Act of 1996; (2) the Property Registration System for Public Officials of 1993; and (3) the Administrative Procedures Act in 1996. These acts commonly could not be enacted under the authoritarian regimes in spite of the strong demand for their enactment from civil society. Details of these acts are as follows.

First, the Official Information Disclosure Act was enacted in 1996. The Official Information Disclosure Act (OIDA) prescribes people’s right to request access to information kept and controlled by public institutions and the public institutions’ obligation to disclose such information. In detail, this law contains provisions which ensure people’s right to know, requiring government agencies to make available any written information in their possession. It has eight exemptions, including official

10. The Office of the Prime Minister and the Economic Planning Board (EPB) conducted policy evaluations which examined the monthly or annual progress of government programs from the 1960s to the 1980s. These program evaluations had an impact similar to examinations conducted by the BAI.

11. This part is based on Jung et al. (2012), co-authored by the author of this paper.

12. As decreed by the Constitutional Court on May 13, 1991 in the “90 Heonma 133 Decision”

Table 4. Laws and Measures for Enhancing Transparency Enacted after Democratization

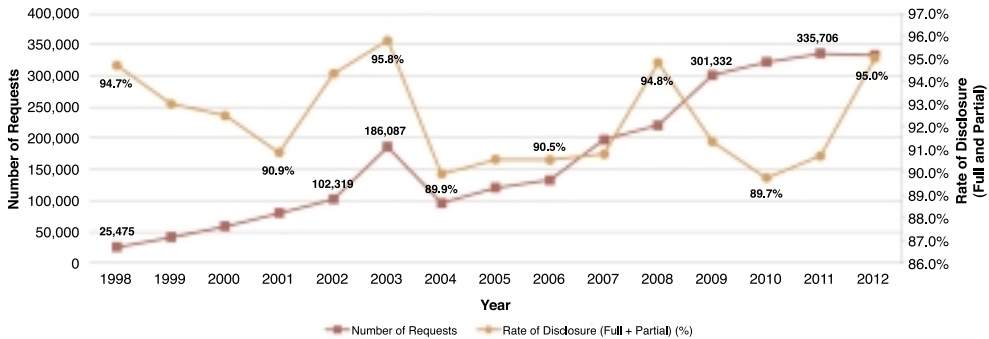
Administrations	Major laws and measures for enhancing transparency
Kim Young-sam administration (1993-1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Emergency Decree for a Financial and Economic Executive Order on Real Name Financial Transactions and Guarantees of Secrecy – Act on the Election of Public Officials and the Prevention of Election Malpractices – Political Fund Act – Act on Disclosing Administrative Information by Public Institutions
Kim Dae-jung administration (1998-2003)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Anti-corruption Law – Establishment of an anti-corruption commission – Measures to protect the act of whistle-blowing or whistle-blowers of corruption – Public right to request inspections, allowing the public to file a request for an inspection at the Board of Audit and Inspection – Act on Confirmation Hearings
Roh Moo-hyun administration (2003-2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – National Integrity Committee – Integrated an information system for anti-corruption – Introduced an electronic information disclosure system – Blind trust on stocks – Political Fund Act – The Amnesty Act – The Act on the Aggravated Punishment on Specific Crimes

Source: Jung et al. (2012) and Yoon (2010)

secrets, privacy data, and information sensitive to commercial activities. It is also tasked with building an open administrative system through oversight and criticism of state affairs, and to securing public participation in state affairs and guaranteeing trust in and the transparency of public administrations.

In addition, The Act provides channels and procedures through which to obtain otherwise inaccessible information so that any citizen can make a request for any record of a government agency, while it imposes a legal duty on the government to disclose public information to citizens. Therefore, every public institution has an obligation to disclose the information it keeps, and to be equipped with an information management system necessary for disclosure under this law (Hong 2010, 179; Park, 2001).

Figure 5 below shows the trends of the requests for governmental information and the rates of disclosure based on the FOIA. After the enactment of FOIA, the number of requests for information held by government agencies increased from 25,475 in 1998 to 333,006 in 2012. The rate of disclosure, which includes the full and partial disclosures of information requested by citizens, has fluctuated between 89.7% and 95.0% annually.

Figure 5. The Number of Requests for Government Information and the Rates of Disclosure

Source: Ministry of Administration and Security. *Annual Report of Government Information Disclosures (Each Year)*.

Second, the Property Registration System for Public Officials was enacted in 1993. The Property Registration System for Public Officials (PRS) is intended to require public officials above a certain grade level to register their personal property to prevent misconduct and corruption. It is a part of the Public Service Ethics Act (PSEA) in Korea, which was enacted and promulgated at the end of 1981. The PSEA states that high-ranking public officials, such as political appointees at the central and local governments and the national assembly members, are required to register personal property owned by themselves, their spouses and other immediate family members. The law also contains clauses on reporting and registering property, reporting gift items, and restrictions on employment for retired public officials. It is important to note that this system signifies a fair degree of progress in terms of higher transparency (Kim 2011, 22-34).

The PRS, discussions on which started in 1981, was implemented, albeit at a very limited level, in 1983 because the administration in power at that time wanted to reinstate the legitimacy that was lacking due to the process through which the Chun administration came to power and to keep at bay public antipathy with regard to the many misconduct and corruption cases that occurred even after the inauguration of the administration. However, the law had deficiencies in that registered items were not subject to disclosure in principle and in that there were no rules on punishment given the results of reviews—despite the fact that there were rules on review. In brief, the administration simply created ‘symbolic uses of politics’ by agreeing that a very limited form of property was subject to registration. Moreover, the registration itself was voluntary (Kim 2011, 17-19; Lee 1993).

Third, the Administrative Procedures Act was enacted in 1996 and revised in 2002. The Administrative Procedures Act (APA) aims at securing fairness, transparency, and

trust in public administration and protecting people's rights and interests by prescribing common items concerning administrative procedures and promoting people's participation in public administration. Considered as one of the two pillars for realizing the expansion of people's rights and preferences and administrative democratization along with the OIDA, the APA has significance as legislation which makes the transition from a state-centric public administration to a participatory public administration (Hong 2010, 3-4).

The APA contains various provisions to secure both transparency in public administrative processes and predictability of the outcomes. All requests made to administrative institutions for processing must be in written form, and administrative institutions must notify the person making the request what is necessary for the request or must provide a handbook so that any person can have access. In addition, different administrative institutions must have a system they can commonly use for swift cooperation. The processing time and criteria for processing results must be as detailed as possible considering the nature of processing results concerned, and the people involved can request an interpretation or explanation of the criteria for processing at a competent institution if the disclosed criteria were not clear enough. In addition, if requestors are imposed upon with obligations or their rights become restricted, notification must be made in advance such that the requestors can defend themselves. In addition, the APA presents the legal grounds for submitting opinions and for hearings (Hong 2010, 60-62; Oh 1998).

E-Government, ICT-adoption for Governmental Transparency

After two decades of striving for informatization, Korea has earned the title as one of the most advanced countries in terms of ICT. As shown in Table 5, the focus of informatization shifted to unit-based or function-based processes such as those for passports, patents and procurement administration in the 1990s with an emphasis on the agency's internal efficiency for public management. From 2000, it was about building a government-wide infrastructure for e-government, for which 11 initiatives and 31 roadmap projects were implemented. With the launching e-government initiatives, the Korean government paid attention not only to achieving administrative efficiency but also to democracy, participation and transparency through the e-government. That is to say, an e-government has been regarded as an "enabler" that promotes citizens' participation in policy-making activities by disseminating government information to the public and providing a means of two-way interactions between public officials and citizens through the e-government system (NIA, 2011).

More specifically, e-government building has contributed to enhancing governmental

Table 5. History of Korea's e-Government Promotion

Phase	Period	Event	Achievement
First Introduction	1978-1987	Computerization of an Administrative System	First and second phase of Administrative System Computerization Projects (1978-1986)
	1987-1996	Construction of a National Backbone Network	First and second phase of National Backbone Construction Projects (1987-1996)
Foundation Building	1996-2000	Informatization Promotion	Foundation-building for a high-speed information and communications network (1995-2005) – Constructed an optical transmission network in 144 zones nationwide Unit or function-based informatization – Procurement, passports, patents, customs, etc.
Project Initiation	2001-2002	11 Initiatives for e-Government	Eleven initiative tasks for electronic civil applications, e-procurement, etc. Partial and limited connection between unit tasks
Growth	2003-2007	31 Roadmap Projects for e-Government	Implemented 31 e-government roadmap projects under the participation of multiple ministries (2003-2007) Amendment of the e-Government Act (Jan. 2007)
Maturity	2008-	Expansion of Integration and Connection	e-government promotion based on utilization and integration Expansion of target organizations to administrative institutions, public offices, and some private-sector organizations Unification of frameworks for national informatization and for the implementation of an e-government

Source: NIA (2011)

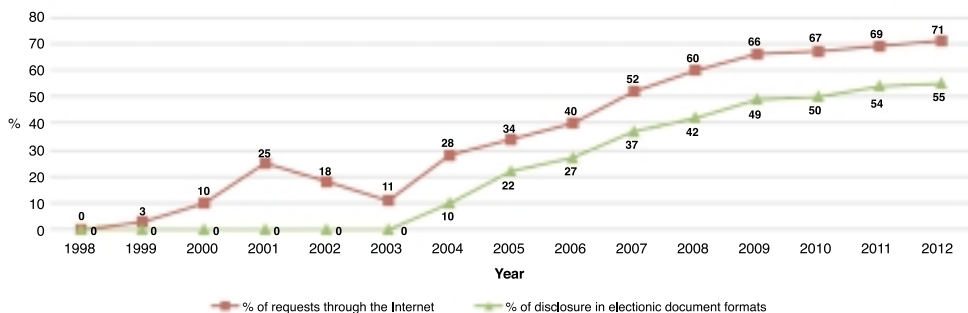
transparency in Korea, especially through public information disclosures and government information dissemination to the public. According to the results of the *User Take-up Survey of e-Government Service* (NIA, 2013), 51.2% of citizens 16 to 74 of age had used e-government services as of November, 2012. One of the main purposes of the use of e-government services is to obtain information about government agencies and policies. 53.2% of e-government users in Korea access the e-government systems and homepages of government agencies for inquiries and to search for information about government policies and administrative actions. In particular, this function is the

most popular service for those who are 16 to 19 and in their 20s.

Moreover, through information sharing and reducing the paperwork in conjunction with business process reengineering activities, e-government systems can provide transparent transactions between customers and public officials. For example, the Home Tax Service (HTS) system, an e-government initiative in Korea in the field of tax revenue, provides a nationwide service that permits taxpayers to pay taxes online, thus restricting clandestine collusion and bargaining, while also providing various types of public information about taxation in general as well as customer-oriented services (Song, 2004). Another good example is the Seoul Metropolitan Government’s Online Procedures Enhancement system for civil applications (OPEN), which was launched in 1999. Through OPEN, citizens can research the status of their materials and gain information about related government officials online. The OPEN system itself continually checks for delays in processing, and government officials and departments must provide reasons for such delays. It is reported that the success of the system has also dramatically changed the perceptions of the residents of Seoul about corruption, with 68% crediting OPEN with noticeably reducing government corruption in its first five years of operation (Cho and Choi, 2004).

In addition, ICT was adopted to support the effectiveness and increase the efficiency of institutions to promote transparency. One of the examples of combining institutionalized and ICT-enabled transparency is the public information disclosure system on the Internet (www.open.go.kr) based on OIDA. Any person who intends to make a request for information may access the web page of the system and submit an electronic request for such information through the system. The requests through the Internet are delivered automatically to the staff members of the agencies which maintain the information. If the applicant for the information disclosure wants to receive the information

Figure 6. Portion of Requests through the Internet and Disclosures in Electronic File Formats



Source: Ministry of Administration and Security. *Annual Report of Government Information Disclosure* (Each Year)

in an electronic file format, this is also possible. As shown in Figure 6 below, online applicants accounted for 69% of all applications as of 2011 (with mail at 4%; fax at 5%, and in-person at 22%). Information disclosures in an electronic file format accounted for 54% of the total as of 2011. This online public information disclosure system has been evaluated as saving time and reducing the costs incurred in implementing FOIA institutions (Ministry of Administration and Security, 2012).

FACTORS INFLUENCING IMPROVED GOVERNMENTAL TRANSPARENCY IN KOREA

This leads to the question of what factors influence the adoption of policies to improve governmental transparency in Korea. As previous research has pointed out, democratization acts as the most important macro-level causal factor. With the democratic transition in 1987 followed by its consolidation, Korean people began to demand more in terms of their right to know government administrative actions and public policies.

Under the democratized political environment, active civic engagement for more transparency has been given greater consideration and has received political support from the public as a policy agenda item (Jung et al., 2012). Major civic groups¹³ have served as central advocates and built supporting coalitions for the movement to improve transparency by means of various activities, including filing legislative petitions, opening a civil counseling center, holding public hearings, and supporting academic research on the legislations and institutions. Even after the enactments and the institutionalization activities, they have monitored recurring problems with the acts, supervised whether the acts were implemented as they stipulated, and, an act should require revision, filed petitions and engaged in civil counseling to make the revisions possible (Jung et al., 2012; Eom and Heo, 2011).¹⁴

In addition, democratization has made the National Assembly stronger and more autonomous than before (Park, 2000). The constitution revised after democratization

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13. The major civic groups which played central roles in the course of enacting laws and institutionalizations for improving transparency are as follows: the Citizens' Coalition for Economic Justice (CCEJ) and academic associations such as the Korean Public Law Association (KPLA) in the case of the APA and the OIDA, the People's Solidarity of Participatory Democracy (PSPD) in the case of the Property Registration System for Public Officials, and the KPLA and the Korean BAR Association in the case of the APA.
 14. Refer to Jung et al. (2012) for detailed information about the civic engagements in the course of the institutionalization process for improving transparency.

in the Sixth Republic bestowed the National Assembly with a stronger position; the president cannot dissolve the National Assembly, there is no limit to the total number of days in session, and the National Assembly has the power to inspect all aspects of executive operations during every annual regular session. In addition, the relationship between ruling and opposition parties changed after democratization with the results of elections. For example, since the transition to democracy, there has often been a minority government with opposition parties holding a majority in the National Assembly. Political parties usually have strong internal integration and unity, and this makes the legislative decision-making process a form of party government. This type of “divided government” generates the opportunity to develop a ‘politics of coalition building’ among multiple parties. All of these factors have contributed to giving the National Assembly increased power while also restraining the executive branch. The National Assembly in the democratic era has become more assertive, independent, and vigorous than it was in the authoritarian past. The increased power of the National Assembly has contributed to enhancing governmental transparency, carrying out the functions of a watchdog over the executive branch.

Under democratization, presidents who have the background of a ‘fighter for democracy’ and their political parties have regarded transparency as an important value for democracy and administrative reform. Consequently, they have pledged to introduce measures and institutions that enhance government transparency, such as the OIDA, the APA, the ‘Anti-corruption Law,’ the ‘Real Name Financial Transaction System’ and other measures. In the course of developing their presidential election pledges, they received policy proposals from NGOs who strongly argue against the institutionalization of transparency. After taking office, presidents have attempted to fulfill their election pledges with regard to governmental transparency. Presidents acted as entrepreneurial politicians who fought at times against powerful existing stakeholders. It was this type of presidential leadership that decisively supported those examples of institutionalization to enhance governmental transparency.

Also, as competition over elections grew fierce with democratization, for example, with the democratic opening of the Sixth Republic, the percentage of the first-term legislative members in the Thirteenth Assembly increased again to fifty-five percent. It was reduced to forty-one percent for the Fourteenth Assembly, showed a slight increase for the present Fifteenth Assembly (forty-six percent), and then decreased to forty-one percent again for the Sixteenth Assembly (Park, 2000). This higher level of competition in elections has been an advantage for politicians as they respond to such demands for reforms by the public, or for their constituents, for their own electoral success, leading to the enactment of laws and regulations to enhance governmental transparency. After all, changes in macro-level political environments, specifically

democratization and changes in values held by the public, pursuing public and personal interests by politicians and members of civic social communities alike, have cooperated and worked positively towards improved transparency.

Finally, executive dominance, one of the major enduring characteristics of Korean public administration since the era of the authoritarian regimes, has been one of the major factors influencing the governmental transparency. In fact, it was not the National Assembly or civic groups but the public officials in the executive branch who were in control of the game of improving governmental transparency, even under democratization. Essentially, bureaucrats strongly opposed the enactment of the APA and OIDA, arguing the potential for drastic increases of administrative burdens and costs.¹⁵ They tried to narrow the scope of the application of the acts and to employ diverse exceptional clauses. In addition, career civil servants steeped in administrative expediency were at the center of the advocacy coalition against such policies. The OIDA bill was withheld at the second vice-ministerial meeting due to the divergent opinions between agencies (Eom and Heo, 2011; Kim 2000, 176; Ministry of General Affairs, 1997: 39).

This resistance of the bureaucrats had a regressive effect on the bills (Hong, 2008). For example, the enactment of citizens' right to engage in active participation in the administrative process failed in the APA. In addition, provisions on information not to be made available to the public were prescribed in a comprehensive manner in the OIDA. This led to problems in the implementation of the OIDA, such as public officials' arbitrary decisions to refuse reasonable requests for public information and improper denials by government agencies (Park, 2001).

CONCLUSION

It was not until the democratic transition of 1987 that the transparency of the government began to improve in Korea. Under the authoritarian regimes, secrecy was emphasized for governing over transparency. Some administrative measures, such as audit and inspection activities of the BAI, can be evaluated as having contributing to

15. They made a case that from the perspective of public administrators who must become more responsive, the legislation of administrative procedures practically amounted to giving up flexibility in public administration. Another concern raised by them was that the enactment of the APA would make it difficult to process administrative work normally when the demand for administrative processing was growing at an exponential rate (Kim, S.S. 2003).

enhancing governmental transparency in this era, although they had clear limitations. The key characteristic of the transparency policy after democratization was the pursuit of the simultaneous progress of institutionalized and ICT-enabled governmental transparency. On the one hand, citizens' accessibility to and the disclosure of public information were institutionalized. On the other hand, ICTs enable citizens to access such information more efficiently through non-stop operations and one-click services. The ICT systems and the Internet function as an efficient channel for delivering public information for improving transparency. In the course of establishing the institutions to improve governmental transparency, however, executive dominance and bureaucrats' resistance to governmental transparency were the major challenges.

What are the policy implications for developing countries from the Korean case? First, building e-government systems is one of the most critical steps to making more information available. Certainly, ICT capabilities for supporting public information disclosures will result in a high level of governmental transparency while also reducing the costs and level of inconvenience felt by citizens. However, policymakers in developing countries should consider the fact that different countries have different capabilities and different institutional and cultural backgrounds for successful ICT adoptions in the public sector. In this vein, careful evaluations of existing information systems and ICT capabilities in the public sector should be carried out while modifying successful cases for enhancing government transparency in other countries.

Second, rigorous institutional arrangements with regard to governmental transparency should be built. The enactment of legal frameworks and regulations can be the first step for achieving a more transparent government, as institutions can define the authorities, levels of accessibility, and the scopes of openness of public information. However, the Korean cases point out that extensive and holistic institutional reform will be necessary over piecemeal reforms. The enactment of only FOI laws is not sufficient (Bellver and Kaufmann, 2005). Rather, other types of laws which regulate different dimensions of transparency, including openness of administrative procedures, controlling corruption by public officials and politicians, the effectiveness of public informational resource management, and so on, should be enacted. Furthermore, in order to enhance the effectiveness and the efficiency of the implementation of policies for fostering government transparency, these institutions should be supported by various policy tools, including e-government systems (Kolstad and Wiig, 2009).

Third, government efforts for improving transparency should be incorporated with the powers of civil society (Mudacumura, 2014; Park, 2001; Vishwanath and Kaufmann, 1999). There are more systematic ways for civic groups to be empowered and to solicit voices in the course of improving governmental transparency. For example, regular surveys of government transparency of civic activists can be carried out. In addition,

members of civic groups can participate in the decision-making process. These measures are expected to play an important role as an outside monitoring system. In sum, extensive institutional reforms for enhancing government transparency incorporated with civic group participation and ICT adoption will contribute to furthering government transparency and openness in developing countries.

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