

The Participation and its Patterns in Policy Process: The Korean Case in an Age of Authoritarianism and Modernization

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I. Introduction

In the modern society, it is a critical criteria who and how to participate in policy process. In order to determine whether a political system is a real democratic one or not, we must examine that who participate and that the participating mechanism is in the order.

In the days of modernization and industrialization, Korea has suffered from legitimacy crisis and from mal-function of political participation. So, to analyze Korean society, we have first to analyze its policy process and policy participation.

First, let me begin with the concept of policy process and participation. The concept of policy process is very dynamic one which includes all the stages of policy formation, policy-making, policy implementation and evaluation. Dynamic and diverse as it is, no agreed views can be found as to the minor stages of policy process. However, a careful comparison and analysis leads us to the common framework which follows: (a) policy formation (policy agenda setting) → (b) policy making → (c) policy implementation → (d) policy evaluation. Logically each stage is chronical and distinguished from each other, but practically it is extremely complexed and dynamic.

Still, the concept of participation in policy process can be defined at large as follows: An intentional intervention in each stage of policy process made by either formal or informal participants through their various resources. And the issue of participation is indispensable and critical when the policy process is discussed.

The participants in the policy process can be specified with two shape on the whole. The one, formal participant, has legal authorities in policy process and the

other, the informal one, has not. Formal participants are the Congress, the chief of executives, government institute, courts and the political parties (especially the ruling party). And informal participants are the political parties, interest groups, mass media and citizens including specialists.

We can summarize the attributes of the participation in policy process as follows: first, it is a proactive activity. A mere representation of an opinion or an attitude is not a participation. Second, it is an intended activity. So serving a draftec or paying taxes are not a participation. Third, there are many types of participation, for example, political, administrative, organizational and inter-organizational participation.

Now, I will discuss the policy system and its environment in Korea whose characters can be classified into three major aspects. And after suggesting a brief summarized features of Korean policy process, I will suggest the issue of openness of policy information as a conclusion.

II. Policy System and Its Environment in Korea

The fact that Korean people have not been able to enjoy the democracy and the participation in reality, is mainly due to the public administration as a state apparatus. Neither does it accept the change of turbulent society nor does it intermediate the conflicts and frictions among many forces of society; instead, it has emphasized its role as a social controller which designs policy goals as to all the field of politics, economy and society in the view of development administration. These blind acceptance of developmental administrative view resulted in the political authoritarianism in connection with Korean patriarchial authoritarianism and it, in its turn, accelerate the anti-democratic situation—which means social control by public administration and restriction from policy participation—on the base of the idea, “efficiency-the-best”.

Considering these facts, one cannot study Korean policy process in the tool of pluralistic view, and I do insist on using the concept of state corporatism instead. In this context of state corporatism, following statement cannot have been a more precise description in defining Korean society; “Public Administrative Sector(i.e. policy system) overwhelms the rest of the sector(i. e. policy environment).”

In this section, let me explain the relations between public administration as a policy system and society as a policy environment.

1. Policy System which is Free From the Social Ruling Class

Strictly speaking, Korean society is an incipient industrial society which does not have the capitalistic maturity and perfectness. As is the usual case in peripheral society, it consists of non-class social relations which is based on mixed di-

versity of social constitute and noneconomic relationship that is still fluctuating. This non-class social relations are combined with patriarchal authoritarianism based on the traditions of Confucianism. So the existing general theories which follows the Western concept of "class" are not able to explain the administrative authoritarianism and autonomy from the bourgeoisie class which assume a non-class attribute in Korea.

The administrative autonomy from the society in Korea is mainly due to the fact that the public administration sector have had an initiative in the course of fixing capitalism in Korea since the time military regime of U. S. A. and the Korean War. The discretion of public administration sector has grown in proportion to the weakness of the amount of national capital by disposing Japanese property and by allocating aid goods of U. S. A., since liberation from Japanese colony and the Korean War, which made ruling class of Korean society subordinated to the public administration sector. So the "bureaucratic authoritarianism" which is originated in the South American situation can partly explain the authoritarian attribute of Korean society. However, it is totally incapable of explaining the background of Korean situation.

Basically, the concept bureaucratic authoritarianism is based upon the theory of deepening industrialization which deals with the proposition that it comes to existence in order to cope with the various social problems in the highly industrialized developing country. So it can only afford a diagnostic explanation of status quo. Still, the bureaucratic authoritarianism can be applied to Korean society in the fact that (a) the operating procedure of public administrative organization and the policy making procedure rest on the bureaucrat-centered technical rationality rather than on people, (b) Economic development and social stability are the most important ruling ideology, and (c) the real base of power is not in the people but in the upper part of public administrative organization. But it must be distinguished bureaucratic authoritarianism from Korean situation, in the aspect of background of the political-administrative authoritarianism.

Another reason for administrative autonomy is that Rhee Sing-Man Regime neglected eliminating vestiges of Japanese imperialism. What is worse, this negligence added by central dictatorial tradition of Chosun Dynasty resulted in the superiority of bureaucrats over citizens. Korean administrative bureaucrats not only coordinated a social conflict caused by a rapid industrializing but also intervened proactively with a view to preventing a social conflict which may hinder the industrialization, which resulted in the block off the diversification of the structure of society. All of these attribute of Korean administrative bureaucrats are consolidated by an "administrative autonomy" which was formed in Rhee Sing-Man Regime and by the militarian way of thinking in the course of the Third and Fourth Republic.

Under these explanation, one thing I want to mention is that "policy system

which is free from social ruling class" does not mean that the relationship between policy system and social ruling class is an antagonistic one, but, rather, hierachial integration.

2. Policy System which is Active in Mobilizing and Reorganizing Social Forces

The idea of administrative initiative, as mentioned above, has led to the reorganizing the whole social structure and to corporatic control over social forces. This mobilization and reorganization was a by-product of the intentional effort which has attempted the legitimacy recovery since the coup d'etat in 1961.

Both president Park Chung-Hee and president Chun Doo-Hwan made an effort to maintain their political base and to establish a legitimacy of their regime with economic development. These efforts were accomplished by the corporatic control over all the sectors of society and it resulted in the dependent growth of interest groups. After the Third Republic of President Park, interest groups became a government-patronized organizations, not a pressure groups, because of the administrative's direct intervention.

The logic which enables administrative sector to mobilize and to reorganize is that of development administration and that of national security mainly based on the partition of Korean Peninsula. The theory of development administration relies basically on the approach of "tickle down effect" which reads "the welfare of people can be gradually better off by dint of aggregated economic development for privileged class."

This strategy brought somewhat positive results, but it did a number of negative side-effect, too. First, it has separated labors, farmers and humble class from bureaucratic-military-capitalist coalition. And this separation caused a political dissatisfaction on the contrary of the purpose of regime. Second, as the concept of development concerns diversified social structure and social phenomena as well as GNP, the amount of exports and revising industrial structure, so social development cannot be measured with a quantified manipulated statistics. Third, as the strategy focused its way on unbalanced one, it deepened the mal-distribution of income. Fourth, the logic of national security, which is the unique case in Korea, was a main tool to suppress a reformation movement of social class. What made this logic admittable to the citizen is, the division of Korean Peninsula and prevalent ideological conservatism of citizens caused by the Korean War. Some of old generations who have ever experienced the War understood democracy as a counter-ideology against communism and regarded it as a conservative or an extreme-right ideology. And the rulers abused this misunderstanding as a maintaining tool for their power. Fifth, all these circumstances linked with a negligence of due process of law and policy. When the bureaucrats once convinced

that a policy was proper in their own view, it had been a common practice that bureaucrats resorted to unilateral enforcement of public policy without a due process of making compliance of citizens, policy-related groups and street-level organizations. The problem of compliance strategy was rather a matter of controlling over citizens and of mobilizing them in Korea while it was a matter of inter-governmental coordination in U. S. A.

3. Policy System which has been Inactive in Integration of the Grass-root People

In contrast to the proactiveness in mobilizing and reorganizing, the political and administrative system in Korea was so inactive in integrating the grass-root people and in mobilizing a true support from them. Especially, the student movement and the labor movement can be good example.

As to student movement, on one hand, the response of politician and bureaucrats was too inactive. Student movement has resulted from the increase of college students thanks to a populization of education and from their intellectual conflict over the Korean situation. Students have made their power influential since Students' Revolution on April 19, 1960 and they have played as critical a role as ever practiced in other country. In spite of their influence, the reaction of politicians, security administrators and education policy makers was not on an integrative base but on a separational one. Admitting that the logic of development administration or of national security can persuade young generation, government did not recognized the entity of student movement. The example of this response of government are the inadequate enforcement of National Security Act, the Act of Assembly and Demonstration and the Road Traffic Act.

As to labor movement, on the other hand, the response of politicians and bureaucrats was also too inactive. The achievement of rapid economic development fell on a few bureaucratic monopolistic capitalist—neither national capital nor comprador one—, which made labor class dissatisfied. Against this dissatisfaction politicians did not attempt to get labor class to be their supporters but to block them off for the time being by coercive exclusion. Politicians continued at once legal control through adapting labor-related acts and strategic control through so-called administrative guidance. They excluded labor class in the course of policy and/or political process in the course of making a "hierarchical coalition" between government and big business.

III. Conclusion: Toward Openness of Policy Information

A. Features of Korean Policy Process

Based on the discussions made so far, I can summarize the main features of

Korean policy process as follows:

1. "Inside Access Model" and "Mobilization Model" is more frequently used than "Outside Initiative Model" as a policy formulation model. This fact implies that the formal participants play more important role than the informal ones do. And this gave rise to a frequent modification and trial-and-error of policy and to a waste of resources owing to improvised policy making under the political leaders' hasty decision. Eventhough a policy proves to be an absurd one, it tends to be continued simply because it is decided by the political leader. This tendency has brought about sacrifices of the policy target groups. One can find out this tendency in the example of the abolition of college's autonomous right of admission, policy of real estate, housing, price and so on.

2. In the policy process, it is more likely to depend bureaucrat-centered technical rationality than upon citizen-centered consensus. This phenomena resulted from the bureaucrats' sense of superiority to citizens. More often than not, in case they make a redistributive policy, they rest their decision on their own discretion, they regard it as a favor which they can bestow and even demand a counter-consideration from the redistributive policy target groups. This phenomena have caused a restricted participation of informal policy participants up to the Fifth Republic.

The lack of autonomy made it impossible for the interest groups to fix their own organization and even the political parties were not capable of aggregate citizens' interest, either. Thus, the channel of participation was extremely restricted.

3. Practically Congress has not participated in policy process which due to following four reasons in Korea; first, the strong presidency based on Korean unstable political situation made its role in policy process too active. Second, the bureaucrats were busy in following the intention of president rather than in following that of Congress. Third, the policy making power was concentrated in the upper strata of public policy organization. Fourth, the main tool of policy was not a form of act, but that of administrative planning, the enforcement ordinance and administrative guidance. For these reasons, the role of Congress in policy process was rather weak.

4. Policy process, especially policy making process, was not made in public. Not only a policy of diplomacy and national defence, but also the majority of policies assumed this closedness. Furthermore, in the Fifth Republic, the Press Act blocked off the policy information in order to prevent the openness of it.

B. Conclusion: Toward Openness of Policy Information

It is the best way for the successful implementation of policy to disclose policy/administrative information concerning the right and obligation of citizens. Open

information makes it possible and easier to get support and cooperation of citizens through democratization of policy process and through encouraging the desire for participation. It enables policy makers to foresee the reaction of participants by opening the policy information in public, to be efficient in implementing policies by getting the support of policy target groups and to diminish the illegality and corruption of public officers including policy makers themselves.

Policy makers ought to make an effort to show an equity of policy through the consensus of policy related groups, and to examine how to manage the increasing policy information in the respect of efficient administrative management as well. Except the information of diplomacy, national defense and social security policies or personal privacy, it is not desirable to hold back the policy information for the administrative's own sake.

Now, we must realize the fact that the accomplishment of policy democracy is possible only by recovering a support of citizens for policy, by opening the policy process to all the people related and by enlarging the chances of the participation of theirs.