

Chapter 2

Institutional Presidency and National Development

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2.1 Introduction

As early as the late seventeenth century, Locke (1689) advocated political pluralism by rejecting any absolute, unified, and uncontrolled state power. Unlike Hobbes (1651), another English philosopher of the time, who argued that vesting absolute power in the government would be necessary to avoid an anarchic “war of all against all,” Locke contended that the state should rest on consent and that governing authorities should never have absolute or monistic power. This stance of political pluralism was not something that the Korean people were familiar with when they started rebuilding a new nation state in the late 1940s.

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, Korea has followed a version of “modernization from above” and has thereby been similar to the “late industrializing countries” such as Germany and Japan. Since then, the country’s modernization process has been initiated mainly by political and bureaucratic elites, with the strong influence of foreign powers, but without any consensus building from the common people (Jung 2005). Thus, a strong bureaucratic state was first institutionalized, which then initiated state-led industrialization while marginalizing democratic institutions. It was in the latter years of the twentieth century that such “limping” or “unbalanced” modernization began to turn for the better amid booming industrialization and the development of civil society. Since the foundation of the Republic of Korea—for the first time in its history— in 1948, the

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country achieved state building (1940s–1950s), industrialization (1960s–1980s), and democratization (1990s–2000s). In the process of its development in such a relatively short period of time, the state administration has played a leading role and, by its nature, the president’s executive leadership has been one of the most important factors.

In general, the country’s executive leadership is supported by the constitution and other ordinances. It is also supported by diversely institutionalized core executive apparatuses, including the presidential secretariat (PS) and the central agencies (CA).¹ Through these staff organizations, the chief executive intervenes in the activities of various levels of administrative apparatuses within the executive branch. In Western industrialized countries, the core executive apparatuses had become more positively institutionalized after the mid-twentieth century, when the state’s growth made it difficult to steer and coordinate the differentiated administrative apparatuses (Rose 1984; Dunleavy and Rhodes 1990; Burke 1992; Peters et al. 2000). Although Korea’s First Republic was launched in 1948, the country was—in practice—a type of Asiatic administrative state, with executive predominance as well as concentration of power within the executive branch from the very beginning (Jung and Kim 2007). In this context, it is important to illuminate how Korea’s executive leadership has been institutionalized since its foundation.

The institutionalization of the executive leadership is related to public values such as political responsiveness and administrative competence. In a democratic society, for example, the president’s executive leadership should be practiced for political accountability and democratic representativeness (Finer 1941; Kaufman 1956; Rockman 1984; Aberbach 1990; Moe 1993). It is supported by laws, but should also be constrained by them. It is expected that the presidential executive leadership also be practiced without undermining the bureaucracy’s neutral competence, which may “entail the application of bureaucratic expertise in an objective manner to obtain the best outcomes possible” (Kaufman 1956; Hecl 1975; Dickinson 1997; Meier 1997; Goodsell 2004), and contribute to long-term national interests by enhancing the state’s autonomy and “plan rationality” (Johnson 1982).

This chapter intends to analyze the changes in, and continuity of, the institutional characteristics of the presidential executive leadership in Korea during the past six decades. It will also discuss how executive leadership has been practiced, reflecting public values such as political accountability, democratic representativeness and responsiveness, the neutral competence of administrative bureaucracy, policy capabilities, and so on.

¹ Central agencies are generally defined as the “departments, agencies, and offices [that] perform the functions [which are] essential to the co-ordination and control of bureaucracy throughout government” (Campbell and Szablowski 1979, 2). In this article, central agencies and the presidential secretariat are differentiated from each other. They have evolved separately as core executive apparatuses to support the presidential leadership in Korea (Jung et al. 2011).

2.2 Institutional Arrangements for Executive Leadership

Korea has maintained a presidential executive system for more than 60 years, with the only exception being a short-lived parliamentary government from 1960 to 1961. The Constitution of the United States (US), which has maintained a presidential system from the start, declares that only the president is bestowed with executive authority. Unlike the US constitution, the Constitution of the Republic of Korea mentions specifically the power of the president and policy apparatuses over the executive branch (Jung et al. 2011). Based on this constitutional foundation, the Korean government has institutionalized a set of complex core executive apparatuses to support the president's executive leadership.

This complex institutionalization has been caused partly by the nation's unique political executive system. The Korean government has maintained a presidential system with some parliamentary executive factors, though it is different from the dual executive system in France. The prime minister is appointed by the president, who is directly elected by the people, and "assists the president and receives the president's orders to supervise each executive ministry" (The Constitution, Article 86). Though the prime minister needs the confirmation of the national assembly to take office, he or she is—in reality—appointed chiefly in accordance with the president's will. Therefore, the prime minister maintains a position as a member of the president's staff. This dualism makes Korea's core executive apparatuses affiliated not only with the president, but also with the prime minister. The apparatuses include the PS, the prime minister's office (PM's office), and the CAs—all of which are in charge of the core executive or administrative functions headed by the chief executive (Jung et al. 2011).

2.2.1 *The Presidential Secretariat: de facto "inner cabinet"?*

The PS is the central staff organization of the chief executive in any presidential system, but differs greatly according to country and period (Jung et al. 2010). In Korea, the degree of differentiation of the PS had been low from the commencement of the Syngman Rhee administration (1948–1960) to the end of the first term of Chung-hee Park (1963–1967) (Fig. 2.1). During this period, the PS took care merely of the PS's internal administrative affairs, protocol, public relations, and so forth.

It was at the beginning of President Park's second term in 1968 that the PS began to be greatly differentiated functionally and was expanded in size by the creation of various sub-organizations for different public policy areas. Most secretarial positions were upgraded to senior secretarial positions, to be on par with ministers or vice ministers. This change occurred with the launching of the second 5-Year Economic Development Plan (1967–1971). During the period from 1968 to 1971, the office of the senior secretary for economic affairs, for example, was differentiated into three senior secretary offices which were separately in charge of the general economy, transportation, health and welfare, liquidation of insolvent

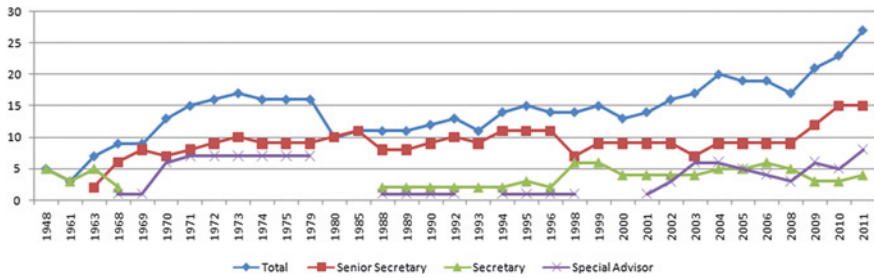


Fig. 2.1 Intraorganizational changes in the presidential secretariat, 1948–2011. *Source* Based on data from Jung et al. (2002), the *Donga-Ilbo* (<http://www.donga.com>) and the presidential office (www.president.go.kr/kr/index.php)

enterprises, and foreign debt management. When his third term was launched in 1972, President Park reorganized the senior secretary offices into the Senior Secretary for Economic Affairs I (covering finance and the economy, agriculture and forestry, commerce and industry, and construction); the Senior Secretary for Economic Affairs II (science and technology); and the Senior Secretary for Economic Affairs III (tourism promotion).

In addition, several special advisors were appointed for diplomacy, politics, education and culture, society, inspection and investigation, and so on. These positions were transformed into senior secretary ranks in 1980 by President Doo-hwan Chun (1980–1988). Unlike special advisors who worked with the aid of only a few administrative assistants, the senior secretaries—as chiefs of their offices—were given the support of a large number of staff members, including secretaries at the director-general level (Grades I to III). These senior secretary offices, as differentiated by policy areas, have been partially restructured, depending on the president, but the basic format has been maintained to show its durability.

The differentiations of the PS can be explained by state-led national development policies which have been conducted aggressively in Korea. Since the early 1960s, the Korean government has established a large number of economic and industrial administrative apparatuses to assertively implement its developmental policies. To incorporate these differentiated organizations into an overall national policy, the PS was enlarged and strengthened, especially since the late 1960s.

The senior secretaries to the president have been in charge of several related administrative apparatuses, and the steering of their policymaking and implementation has been conducted in a top-down way. Currently, the senior secretary to the president for economic affairs, for instance, is in charge of at least six ministerial level organizations, including the Ministry of Strategy and Finance; the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; the Ministry of Knowledge Economy; the Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs; the Fair Trade Commission; and the Financial Services Commission. The senior secretaries work closely with the president in terms of distance and communication, and have always had greater decision-making power compared to personnel of other

administrative organizations. As an example, although there are individual differences, most of the ministers who wish to discuss a policy issue with the president must first discuss it with the relevant senior secretary, who then decides on the theme of the meeting, and also attends the meeting. This decision-making process has given the PS significant autonomy, similar to a de facto “inner Cabinet.” The top-down structure of the PS has been maintained ever since, with some meaningful changes (Jung et al. 2010).

First, the more the PS has been differentiated and expanded, the greater has been the need for functional integration and coordination. As indicated in the previous paragraph, each senior secretary has managed several ministries and agencies of a related policy area. This has meant that the senior secretary has tended to represent the policy perspectives of the latter. As the complexity of the secretariat has increased, the difficulties of policy coordination have taken place not only within the cabinet (i.e., between ministries or agencies) but also within the PS (i.e., between secretarial offices). This had led President Young-sam Kim (1993–1998) to set up an office of senior secretary for policy planning to horizontally coordinate the secretarial offices. However, the attempt to facilitate policy coordination within the PS was not effective, and the senior secretary for policy planning had to maintain his position by initiating new tasks that did not particularly interest other senior secretaries. President Moo-hyun Roh (2003–2008) attempted to resolve that problem more vigorously by upgrading the senior secretary for policy planning to the chief of policy staff, in charge of coordinating between senior secretaries. Since then, the double-headed system of the PS, comprising the chief of staff and the chief of policy staff, has been institutionalized, resulting in the PS operating hierarchically rather than collegially. The chief of staff has had overall responsibility for the traditional secretariat, including internal administrative affairs and protocol, public relations, political affairs, foreign and national security affairs, and so forth, while the chief of policy staff has had overall responsibility for coordinating domestic policies.

Second, the PS has been continually faced with legitimacy issues, accused of having a negative image, exercising authoritarianism, or being a “center of power politics.” When President Syngman Rhee resigned following accusations that he was undemocratic, his PS—which dealt at that time mostly with protocol and political, not policy, affairs—was perceived in an unfavorable light as the basic power center of an authoritarian regime. President Bo-seon Yoon (1960–1962), under the parliamentary executive system, attempted to change the adverse image of the presidential residence and office by altering its name from *Gyeongmudae*, which had some connotations of a royal palace, to *Cheongwadae*, or “Blue House”. However, from the presidency of Park (especially from 1972 to 1979) to that of President Chun, when authoritarianism mostly deepened in Korea, the negative image of the PS as the center of authoritarian power politics became more entrenched. Since the democratic transition of 1987, the tendency has been for an incumbent administration to attempt to display its democratic characteristics by diminishing the size and role of the PS. All of the succeeding presidents after the democratic transition have sought to reduce the size of the secretariat

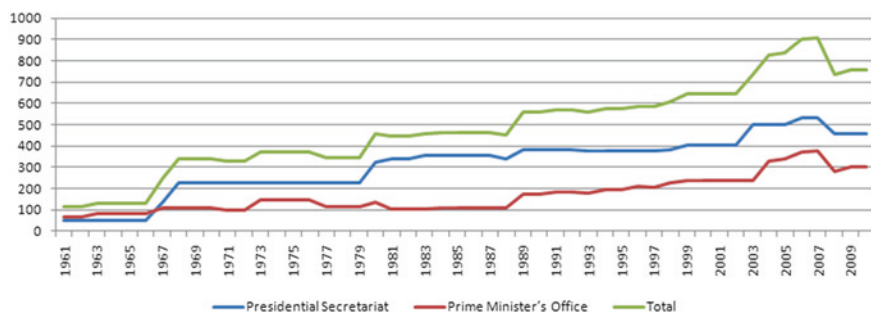


Fig. 2.2 Number of staff in the presidential secretariat and prime minister's office, 1961–2010.
Source Updated from Jung et al. (2002)

and decentralize policymaking and coordination power by delegating these to the prime minister and other ministers at the beginning of their administration. But the size and role of the PS was eventually to grow in later years (Fig. 2.2).

2.2.2 *The Prime Minister and His Office: de facto “political bulletproof vest”?*

There are, formally, only a few organizations directly responsible to the president, including the Board of Audit and Inspection, the National Intelligence Service, and a few advisory committees. Except for them, most of the core executive apparatuses, including the CAs, have been institutionalized under the prime minister. Nevertheless, the heads of these organizations are appointed and directed by the president, and they also directly report to the president without having to first consult with the prime minister. Even the PM's office—the only staff organization to directly assist the prime minister—has not been free from the influence of the PS. For example, the head of the PM's office has been customarily appointed by the president (Jung 1996).

Such a passive and limited role of the prime minister may receive mixed assessments in Korea. In reality, the president makes decisions on, and coordinates most of, the important public policies. But when a policy fails, the prime minister and his office are held responsible. The inconsistency of the prime minister's real and nominal roles and the resulting “inconsistency of power and accountability” have received much criticism (Cho and Im 2010). Even so, it may be possible to also view this inconsistency in a positive light, that is, the prime minister's taking responsibility for most policy failures instead of the president—including cases of his or her resignation, depending on the severity of the issue—has in fact contributed to political stability in Korea. This is proven by the fact that from 1948 to 2008, 9 Korean presidents have had an average term of 6.4 years, while the 38 prime ministers have had an average term of only 1.3 years (Fig. 2.3).

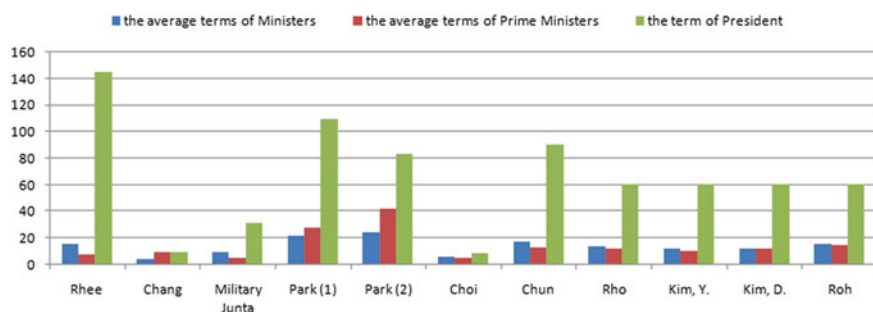


Fig. 2.3 Average terms of ministers, prime ministers, and presidents by administration, 1948–2008. *Note* A unit is 1 month. *Source* Based on data from the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA) (1998) and websites of the prime minister’s office and each of the ministries

As such, Korean prime ministers have acted mostly as a “political bulletproof vest” to protect the president by using symbolic politics. In addition to this role, there are a few other roles that have also been played by the prime minister with the assistance of the PM’s office. These include regulatory reforms and performance evaluations—two major functions that are legally stipulated—as well as some minor level policy coordination between ministries or agencies. While most of the important policy issues have been carried out directly by the president and the PS, those that could be politically risky for the president, or carry high opportunity costs, are mostly delegated to the prime minister and the PM’s office.

As if to reveal its real position, the legal base of the PM’s office has been vague until now (Jung et al. 2011). The role of the PM’s office was relatively significant when a prime minister was politically or personally close to a president, as in the case of Prime Ministers Jong-pil Kim (1971–1975), Jae-bong Rho (1990–1991), and Hea-chan Lee (2004–2006) (Han 2010). But even in these instances, the delegated authority was temporary and due largely to the political need of the president. If the prime minister challenged the president in any way, he could scarcely keep his position.

Since the democratic transition in 1987, Korean presidents have been criticized for practicing an “imperial presidency” or chief executive predominance within the executive branch. This has made them respond in one of two ways. First, presidents tend to rely more on the symbolic uses of politics. For example, when President Tae-woo Rho (1988–1993) participated in cabinet meetings, with the prime minister seated next to him, he—along with other cabinet members—would remove his jacket and roll up his shirtsleeves to present an atmosphere that was both practical and democratic to the press. Regardless of this unusual political gesture, the rate of his participation in cabinet meetings was the lowest (Table 2.1).

Second, after the 1987 democratic transition, presidents have been inclined to decentralize decision making and entrust it to the prime minister and the PM’s office—at least on the surface—in the hope of proving their democratic

Table 2.1 Participation of presidents in all cabinet meetings by administration, 1949–2001

President	Park-1					Park-2			Chun			Rho			Y. Kim			D. Kim		
Year	Rhee	1949	1953	1956	1958	1965	1968	1970	1974	1976	1982	1984	1986	1988	1992	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001
Proportion (%) of participation	66.0	71.0	38.0	35.8	35.8	3.5	4.0	10.2	16.8	6.1	7.2	3.7	5.4	2.0	1.8	9.8	6.0	3.4	73.5	83.9

Source Based on data from Chung (1994) and the National Archive (<http://www.archives.go.kr/>)

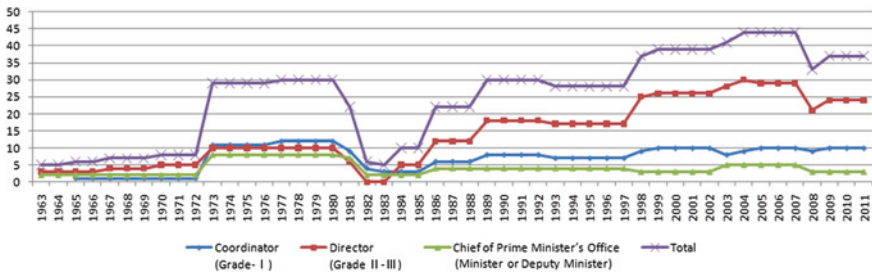


Fig. 2.4 Intraorganizational changes in the prime minister's office, 1963–2011

credentials, and hence the legitimacy of their administration. For example, the PM's office came to serve as a secretariat for the vice ministerial meetings since 1994, the Presidential Commission on Administrative Reform (1993–1998), the Regulatory Reform Committee (1998–present), and the Government Performance Evaluation Committee since 1998 (Jung 2007). The addition of these functions to the PM's office, with legal bases, has enhanced substantially not only its differentiation but also its autonomy and durability (Figs. 2.2 and 2.4)

The administration of the incumbent President, Myung-bak Lee (2008–2013), reduced the policy coordinating functions of the PM's office in the name of “small government”. However, it can also be evaluated as a reform to normalize Korea's dualistic structure of the roles of the president and prime minister. In accordance with this change, Prime Minister Seung-soo Han (2008–2009) played an even more limited role than his predecessors, often visiting foreign countries for overseas energy diplomacy. It was only 2 months after the inauguration of his term, however, that the Lee administration realized anew the need for a “political bullet-proof vest” role for the prime minister. Since the administration faced fierce civil protests that erupted during the Korea–US Free Trade Association negotiations on beef imports, the role of the prime minister and the PM's office have been expanding again (Figs. 2.2 and 2.4)

2.2.3 Central Agencies: “Standardizing” Core Administrative Functions

A number of CAs with the title of “board,” “ministry,” “agency,” or “office” have been organized and reorganized either directly under the president or the prime minister (Fig. 2.5). Each CA carries out the standardization of core administrative functions which are essential to the operation of administrative apparatuses. These include policy planning, coordinating, budgeting, organizing, staffing, central–local relations, legislating, public relations, performance evaluation, audit and inspection, and so on. By intervening in the operations of all administrative apparatuses through these standardizations, the CAs ultimately support, directly or indirectly, the executive leadership of the president.

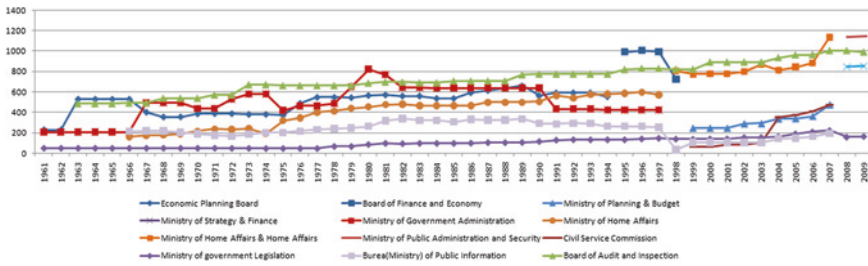


Fig. 2.5 Organizational configurations and staffing of central agencies, 1948–2010. *Note* The police force is excluded from the Ministry of Home Affairs. *Source* Based on data from Yoo and Lee (2010), MOGAHA (1998) and the Board of Audit and Inspection (2008)

Since the CAs standardize and control key administrative functions essential to the operation of administrative apparatuses, the latter are inevitably subordinate to the former in terms of real authority. As Campbell and Szablowski (1979, 2) note, the CAs “stand above other departments in that they perform functions which are thought to be crucial to the *common* interests of government departments, and which relate to matters of major importance”.

Moreover, the personnel of some of the CAs had been given positions or grades on par with, or higher than, ordinary administrative apparatuses. For example, the ministers of the Economic Planning Board (1961–1994) and its succeeding Board of Finance and Economy (1994–1998) were given the rank of deputy prime minister, a position higher than that of other ministers (Jung et al. 2011). The personnel (bureau directors) of the Board of Audit and Inspection have been provided with a higher grade than those in comparable posts (bureau directors) in other ministries. These higher grades or positions put the staff of the CAs on a more elevated level than those in other administrative apparatuses in their interactions. The CAs continue to work closely with various senior secretaries to the president, or the president himself, and effectively support the president by standardizing and controlling crucial administrative functions of other administrative apparatuses.

Since the early 1990s, when the administrative reform process set out to achieve “small government,” some CAs were integrated into related ministries with line functions so that a single ministry could conduct both line and staff functions. For example, the Economic Planning Board was merged with the Ministry of Finance to form the Board of Finance and Economy in 1994, and the Ministry of Government Administration was amalgamated with the Ministry of Home Affairs to form the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (1998). But they were differentiated again, even when the structural adjustment of the public sector was conducted soon after the foreign liquidity crisis of 1997. As a result, the Board of Finance and Economy became, in 1998, the Ministry of Planning and Budget and the Ministry of Finance and Economy, while the personnel administration functions of the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs were hived off into the newly created Civil Service Commission in 1999. In February 2008, when the current administration of Myung-bak Lee

took office, another minor small government-oriented restructuring took place, resulting in the Ministry of Planning and Budget and the Ministry of Finance and Economy being combined to form the Ministry of Strategy and Finance, and the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, the Civil Service Commission, and the Emergency Planning Commission joining to form the Ministry of Public Administration and Security. Regardless of these changes in organizational configuration and size, the CAs have maintained their durability over the past six decades (Jung et al. 2011).

2.3 Periodical Characteristics of Presidential Leadership

The six decades of institutionalization analyzed in the preceding sections can be grouped into three typical periods of around two decades, more or less, reflecting Korea's national development process of state-building, industrialization, and democratization—in that order. The institutional characteristics and performance in regard to public values of the presidential executive leadership of the three periods are discussed below (Sects. 2.3.1, 2.3.2, and 2.3.3)

2.3.1 *Passive Institutionalization of the Core Executive: Late 1940s to Early 1960s*

During its first stage, from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, the PS was not very institutionalized, as indicated above (Figs. 2.1 and 2.6). This can be explained by President Rhee's personal leadership style. He would say that in a country with a presidential executive system—as can be inferred from the use of the term “secretary” (for “minister”) as in the US—the ministers were merely administrative aides to the president, unlike in countries with a parliamentary executive system where the cabinet consisted of mainly senior parliamentary members. As an incomparable political leader with outstanding knowledge of policy, President Rhee practiced executive leadership by mobilizing personal networks from both home and abroad with great charisma, and by communicating directly with ministers within the executive branch.²

² Syngman Rhee was a pioneer of modernization who was imprisoned for almost 6 years (January 1899–August 1904), accused of advocating the institutionalization of a constitutional monarchy. He was a scholar who received a doctorate in international politics and law from Princeton University in 1910; an independence movement activist and first president of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea (1919–1948); and one of the most senior political leaders who became president of Korea at the age of 73, in a society where the political culture considered seniority to be important (Kim 2006, 63–68; Lee 2008; the *Joongang Ilbo*, June 14, 2010, 27).

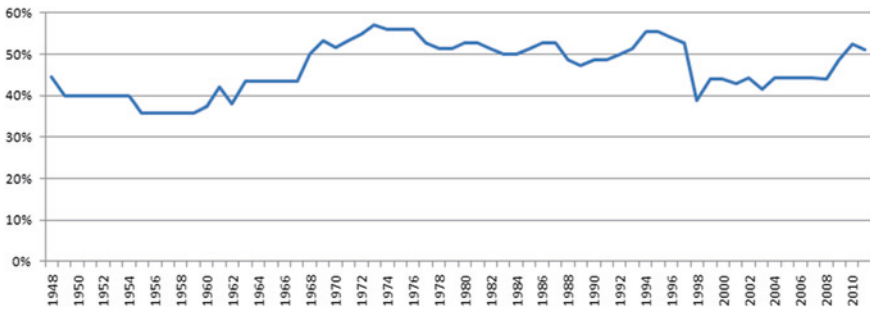


Fig. 2.6 Proportion of core executive apparatuses to total administrative apparatuses within the executive branch, 1948–2011

Considering that the institutionalization of the PS was weak, President Rhee’s overall executive leadership can be said to have been effective, at least during the first half of his term, and can be explained partly by the large differentiation of the CAs during this period. Amidst this stage of state building, the administrative resources were extremely poor because of the near total destruction of this impoverished postcolonial country during the Korean War (1950–1953). Even under these circumstances, the Rhee administration invested a considerable amount of resources to institutionalize the CAs, which occupied 35 % or more of the total administrative apparatuses (Jung et al. 2011).

President Rhee’s able executive leadership during his first term can be explained by his strong political coalitions with the administrative bureaucracy. Despite his charisma and political legitimacy, President Rhee—who spent much time abroad in exile—did not have a durable foundation in party politics in Korea. Thus, he preferred to communicate directly with the public rather than through a political party or the national assembly, and to cultivate political solidarity with the bureaucrats. Most of these bureaucrats had served during Japanese colonial rule and, therefore, lacked political legitimacy. They wanted to consolidate with President Rhee to overcome the issue of weak legitimacy and have their status protected. Against this backdrop, President Rhee was able to secure the loyalty of the bureaucrats and exert executive leadership effectively (Jung 2004).

Toward the second half of his term, President Rhee’s abilities began to wane due to age and he became increasingly caught up with the bureaucracy. In a situation where a merit-based public personnel system was not institutionalized, the bureaucracy’s neutral competence could hardly be improved. Besides, the governing Liberal Party founded by President Rhee had a low degree of democratic responsiveness (Lee 1968, 396). The political solidarity of Liberal Party politicians, who lacked democratic responsiveness, and the extremely politicized bureaucrats, brought about an abundance of injustice and corruption, leading to the administration being called the “Republic of Corruption” (Jung 2005).

The low level of democratic responsiveness, neutral competence, and executive leadership during the latter part of President Rhee’s government made it difficult

to efficiently pursue the national task of post-war reconstruction, not to mention long-term economic development planning and implementation. The Rhee administration collapsed after 12 years in power, due to a rigged presidential election in his third term, following the “April 19 Students’ Uprising”.

After the fall of President Rhee in April 1960, the Korean government amended the constitution and formed a parliamentary political executive. A large number of Koreans at that time regarded the presidential executive system as one of the main reasons that made the Rhee administration undemocratic. However, in less than a year, the experiment with a parliamentary executive system (from August 1960 to May 1961) proved ineffective as well. This failure was caused by several factors, one of which was the people’s enthusiastic political participation after being suppressed by previous authoritarian governments, and the resultant sociopolitical conflicts and disintegration.

Also, Prime Minister Myon Chang’s personal appeal and leadership were too weak to overcome the situation, even where there was no symbolic figure, such as a monarch, who was respected largely by the people and could contribute to forming a centripetal force in parliament and society. To make things worse, the institutionalization of either the PM’s office or the CAs was too inadequate for the idealistic democratic leader to take control over the existing state bureaucracy (Figs. 2.4 and 2.6). In the end, Prime Minister Chang was overthrown after 10 months in power by a coup d’état led by the army—one of the state apparatuses that he was supposed to control in exercising his executive leadership.

2.3.2 Active Institutionalization of the Core Executive: Late 1960s to Late 1980s

During the second stage, the core executive was aggressively institutionalized to maximize the president’s executive leadership (Fig. 2.6). General Chung-hee Park, who assumed power on May 16, 1961 through a military coup, amended the constitution to restore the presidential executive system. He was inaugurated in December 1963, after an election based on the new constitution, and began to actively pursue government-led industrialization. To achieve this, he initiated a great deal of reorganization, differentiating between economic and industrial policy apparatuses and strengthening the CAs and the PS (Fig. 2.1). Unlike his predecessors, President Park was well aware of the usefulness of staff organizations through his long experience as a military commander (Ham 1999; 2006).

Many bright, young people began to be employed in public posts in the early 1970s through a higher civil service examination and other open competitions. The merit-based career civil service, which has been institutionalized since the late 1960s, contributed to substantially improving the neutral competence of the administrative bureaucracy (Jung 2010). From this period on, the administrative bureaucracy began to keep its distance from interest groups, political parties, and even the national assembly, and was less prone to influence. President Park

(1961–1979) and his successor, Doo-hwan Chun (1980–1988), also prohibited bureaucrats from being affected by these groups, political parties, or the national assembly. Both presidents made use of the intricately institutionalized core executive apparatuses to control the administrative bureaucracy in a top-down manner.

President Park and the administrative bureaucrats shared the belief that the state administration should lead national development to catch up with industrialized countries. He was generous toward the bureaucrats, even those who had committed policy errors, so long as they pursued public policies consistent with his directions or value orientations. This brought him the bureaucrats' loyalty and obedience.

While Presidents Park and Chun and the administrative bureaucrats formed a strong nexus, neither president was wholly responsive to democratic accountability. In particular, 15 years from 1972 to 1987 saw representative democracy regress to an inordinate extent in Korea (Jung and Kim 2007). The link between the presidents' top-down executive leadership and the bureaucrats' neutral competence performed well in national development, simplified mainly as economic growth. Along with the regression of representative democracy, the government's responsiveness to public values other than economic growth was very weak. This regression, together with rapid industrialization, seemed to reject the "modernization thesis" and confirm the "bureaucratic authoritarianism" hypothesis in Korea (Jung and Kim 2007). With poor democratic responsiveness due to an increasingly "imperial presidency," the Korean people fiercely pursued the democratization movement, resulting in the demise of the Park administration in 1979 and the Chun administration in 1987.

2.3.3 The Dilemmatic Institutionalization of the Core Executive: Late 1980s to Present

For 25 years after the democratic transition in 1987, Korea has consolidated by passing the "two turn-over test" (Huntington 1991), first in 1997 and then in 2007. When the country's development is evaluated using a longer time span (i.e., from the 1960s to the 2000s), it can be considered a case that backs up the theory of "modernization," that is, by democratizing after being industrialized (Jung and Kim 2007). Since the democratic transition, there have been interesting changes in the executive leadership as well.

Most of all, people's negative sentiments began to spread concerning the predominance of the core executive, which was institutionalized during the authoritarian era. As a result, the presidents who took office after the democratic transition were pressured to reduce the size and role of the core executive apparatuses. Since the transition, therefore, the overall proportion of core executive apparatuses within the executive branch was reduced (Fig. 2.6). But this reduction was brought about by structural adjustments, not to the PS, but to the CAs, some of which were integrated with line ministries, as indicated above (Sect. 2.2.3)

Under the unfavorable circumstances regarding the dominance of the core executive, the presidents—especially those who needed legitimacy to conduct “small government” reforms—attempted to reduce the size or role of the PS, or used some symbolic gesture to suggest their intention of doing so, at least at the beginning of their term. But, as the PS began to grow again in the second half of their tenure, it resulted in the overall maintenance or even increase of the PS since the democratic transition (Fig. 2.1).

This may have been caused by the unrelenting pressure on each of the presidents to effectively achieve policy promises within their single 5-year term, stipulated in the constitution whose amendment had brought about the democratic transition of 1987. The stronger the determination of the presidents to fulfill their promises, the more they felt the need to control the bureaucracy, and hence rely more on the core executive apparatuses, especially the PS.

As such, successive Korean presidents have been faced with a dilemma during the past 25 years. On one hand, they have attempted to reduce and decentralize the PS to pursue further democratization and decentralization as well as a policy of “small government.” On the other, they have had to rely on the more active role of the core executive apparatuses to fully implement public policies that they had pledged on the platform to win the presidential election.

Since 1987, there has also been a notable change in mutual confidence between presidents and administrative bureaucrats. Since then, the government party has alternated twice, with five new presidents assuming office every 5 years. In the process, the mutual confidence between presidents and bureaucrats has substantially declined. A newly inaugurated president, especially one who had brought in a change of government party, was less inclined to trust bureaucrats who had worked actively for the previous administration. As for the bureaucrats, they tended to be concerned that if they worked too hard for the current president, they would alienate themselves from the succeeding one. The more the mutual trust between the president and the bureaucrats has declined, the more the solidarity that formed between them during the authoritarian era has diminished, resulting in an increasingly complacent and indifferent attitude or behavior among bureaucrats toward the chief executive.

Despite changes in the mutual confidence between the president and the bureaucracy, the neutral competence of the latter has improved steadily. Civil servants have been provided with more diverse training opportunities both at home and abroad, and with more abundant policy knowledge that has been accumulated over the past six decades. Also, they have benefited in terms of status security by the strengthening of the merit-based career civil service during the decade following the democratic transition in 1987 (Jung 2010).

When the liquidity crisis affected Korea in 1997, the government began to conduct administrative reforms by actively adopting New Public Management (NPM) as suggested by the International Monetary Fund (Jung 2010). NPM reforms have had two significant outcomes in regard to executive leadership. The president has gained more opportunity to exercise control over the existing bureaucracy through these reforms, which challenge the guaranteed status of career civil servants by

adopting an “open competition, contract-based, and performance-oriented” system of personnel management. While NPM reforms have provided the presidents with an opportunity to increase their capacity to control the bureaucracy more easily, they have also weakened the cohesion between the president and the bureaucracy. The newly adopted personnel management system—including the open competition, contract-based, and performance-oriented system and a Senior Executive Service—has brought about some confusion and deconstruction of the conventional administrative culture and institutions of integrity, cohesion, continuity, stability, and predictability based on hierarchical authority within the executive branch. The consequence has been a weakening of solidarity between presidents and bureaucrats.

Besides human resource management, the structural changes in administrative organizations have also worked as a factor in weakening the presidential executive leadership. Following the democratic transition, numerous social policy apparatuses were created to meet public service demands. In addition, many “parallel organizations”—mainly committees—were established to respond to the public mistrust of existing administrative apparatuses that actively served during the country’s authoritarian rule. As a result, there was a rise in “organizational pluralism” (Rosenbloom 1993, 167–186), with increased checks and balances between administrative apparatuses (Jung 2010). This growth in organizational pluralism has lowered the president’s capacity to coordinate policies and control the administrative bureaucracy. Since the democratic transition, successive presidents have had to face escalating conflicts not only among social groups due to an expansion in political participation, but also among administrative apparatuses within the executive branch on policy initiatives.

During the past 25 years, the government’s democratic representativeness and responsiveness have been tremendously enhanced. The neutral competence of the administrative bureaucracy has also been greatly improved. However, the effectiveness of the president’s executive leadership has declined in the increasingly complex environment.

2.4 Conclusion

The analyses in this chapter of the evolution of Korea’s institutional presidency over the past six decades or so show some characteristics of institutional change and continuity in three different stages. The first stage was from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, when institutionalization of the PS was weak and the president depended mainly on his personal charisma and leadership capacity, along with the support of the highly expanded CAs, compared to the total administrative apparatuses. The second stage was from the late 1960s to the late 1980s, when a powerful core executive was institutionalized by differentiating the intraorganizational configurations of both the PS and the CAs according to public policy areas. And the third stage was from the late 1980s to the present, when presidents confronted

Table 2.2 Personnel backgrounds of core executive apparatuses in Korea, 1948–2011

		Career public servants	Politicians	Outside experts	Total
Presidential secretariat		180 (54.5 %)	42 (12.7 %)	108 (32.7 %)	330 (100 %)
Prime minister's office		66 (68.0 %)	17 (17.5 %)	14 (14.4 %)	97 (100 %)
Central agencies	Total	355 (67.2 %)	91 (17.2 %)	82 (15.5 %)	528 (100 %)
	Head	210 (60.3 %)	67 (19.3 %)	71 (20.4 %)	348 (100 %)
	Deputy head	145 (80.6 %)	24 (13.3 %)	11 (6.1 %)	180 (100 %)
Total		601 (62.9 %)	150 (15.7 %)	204 (21.4 %)	955 (100 %)

Note Units are persons. “Public servants” are career civil servants, military personnel, and judicial bureaucrats; “politicians” are members of political parties, the national assembly, and local councils and chief executives; “outside experts” are university professors, businessmen, bankers, journalists, and so on

Source Based on raw data from the National Archive (<http://www.archives.go.kr/>)

the dilemma of having to reduce the core executive to a decentralized, small and democratic government, and at the same time to enhance executive leadership capacity to effectively achieve their policy pledges.

As Fig. 2.6 shows, the core executive was expanded mostly during the period of rapid industrialization. From the late 1960s to the early 1990s, the proportion of core executive apparatuses to the total administrative apparatuses at the ministry level was at its highest. This was the period when Korea was governed by a conservative party. However, the proportion of core executive apparatuses was relatively low during the period when the country was governed by a liberal party (1960–1961 and 1998–2008). Even after the democratic transition in 1987, a top-down control mechanism of the executive leadership was maintained by concentrating decision-making largely in the hands of the president, with the intermediations of the PS and CAs within the executive branch.

The core executive apparatuses in Korea have been staffed largely with experts from within and outside the executive branch, rather than with politicians. During the past 60 years, nearly 63 % of the total staff in positions higher than vice ministers in the core executive apparatuses have been public servants; 21 % have been outside experts; while only 16 % have been politicians (Table 2.2).³ This composition of personnel in the core executive has allowed its policies to be guided by the perspectives of “inside” public servants and “outside” experts, rather than politicians either from political parties or the national assembly, hence orienting it toward consistency and the longer term rather than flexibility and the shorter term.

Based on this analysis, a future direction for executive leadership development in the post-democratization period can be as follows: first, it is desirable to leave civil society with greater opportunities to define and resolve public problems by

³ The only exception has been the short-lived Myon Chang government under the parliamentary executive system, when about 70 % of core executive positions were filled with politicians, while none was staffed by outside experts.

itself. Second, even in cases where the state may still need to resolve problems directly, more decentralization of policy functions and power would need to be pursued actively so that public policy problems would be solved at a local level by applying the subsidiarity principle. Third, it is necessary to decentralize decision-making power within the executive branch, delegating policy coordination from the core executive to administrative apparatuses, accompanied by effective performance evaluation and increased checks and balances among them.

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