

# KOREA'S SAEMAUL UNDONG: SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT\*

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*This is an attempt to analyze the role of government in integrated rural development. With limited data available thus far, Korea's Saemaul Undong is examined as an example of integrated rural development. In its ideals, this movement indeed represents a model of integrated rural development program. Yet, in its implementation, Korean government has taken a leading role, first initiating it and later supporting it in financial and technical assistance terms. This paper argues that the role of government has become almost ubiquitously significant in today's world, whether in the more or less developed parts of the globe. In the case of Korea, the structural features, primarily traditional in its origin, have made it more feasible, if not entirely inevitable, for government to take an active role in this respect. By examining the first few years of results of this movement, which in quantitative terms is an outstanding success, this paper tries to show some crucial structural issues that need to be considered very seriously in order for the movement to continue its success and to become an excellent model of ideally integrated rural development.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Regardless of one's ideological predilections, it has generally become apparent to social scientists that government is pervasive in social change everywhere. As LaPalombara has put it, exhaustive documentation is scarcely needed "to demonstrate that major changes in both the developed and developing nations are inconceivable today without the massive intervention of government."<sup>1</sup> Particularly, in the contemporary context of modernization and development among the relatively less prosperous countries, "a strong state is the *sine qua non*" of change.<sup>2</sup>

On the most general level, the historical trend of enlarged government involvement in social change may be explained as a structural requirement necessitated by the increased structural complexity and functional differentiation due to the widespread industrialization

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1. J. LaPalombara, "An Overview of Bureaucracy and Political Development," in J. LaPalombara, ed., *Bureaucracy and Political Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 4.

2. R.H. Lauer, *Perspectives on Social Change* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1973), p. 157. Also, LaPalombara, *op. cit.*

and modernization. The need for coordination and integration caused by these processes has augmented the role of government.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, the role of government as an agent of deliberate change or planned change has expanded most starkly in the present century, and especially in many societies which started rather late in the world-wide surge for modernization and development.<sup>4</sup> Once exposed to the advanced economies, the “demonstration effect” has pushed up the level of aspirations among the poorer nations. And with limited resources and technologies, these countries have been almost forced to turn to a strong state and greater government intervention in order to achieve rapid economic growth and modernization.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the role of government is not always positive in social change. Government can be a barrier to, as well as a driving force for change. The determining factor in this regard may be found in the basic orientations of the government and the political elite and in the structural characteristics of the society.

For instance, a government may represent the interest of the most powerful and the most privileged of the society. In this case, it may resist any significant change in the structure of power and resource allocation, which may threaten the status quo. In fact, many states in the past and still some in the present have been so oppressive with respect to the peasant that government-directed change programs have often been met with suspicion, resistance, or at least apathy on the part of peasant population. Some of these programs may have been conceived by the governments with genuine desire to help improve the lot of the people. On the other hand, however, examination of history also indicates that government has never been the disinterested bystander in social change, sometimes taking an active role of initiator and sometimes a passive role of supporter of various change efforts in diverse spheres of social life by divergent groups in society. The activity of government may often have benefited some select segments of society, but it is a potent source of change and much of the nature and direction of change in a society with a strong central government must be understood in terms of the activity of that government.<sup>6</sup> This has aroused a debate about whether a strong centralized state is necessarily an authoritarian state or it could also be a democratic one.<sup>7</sup>

Authors have suggested certain factors necessitating a strong government which is authoritarian to be more effective than a democratic state to achieve modernization. For instance, a need for authoritarianism is recognized in the early stages of development.<sup>8</sup> Or, some essential functions of development require a strong government: They may be a) creation of the physical and social foundations for development; b) overall planning and integration of development; or c) to bring about larger and more efficient production and distribution of goods and services.<sup>9</sup> Or, the role of the government is likely to vary

3. W.E. Moore, *Social Change* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

4. *Ibid.*, p.2.

5. Guerreiro-Ramos, A., “Modernization: Towards a Possibility Model,” in W.A. Belling and G.O. Totten, eds. *Developing Nations: Quest for a Model* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold), pp. 21-59.

6. Lauer, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-157.

7. For the authoritarian argument, see LaPalombara, *op. cit.*, and R. Heilbroner, *The Future as History* (New York: Harper, 1959). For the democratic argument, see W. McCord, *The Springtime of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965). For a general discussion of the issue, Lauer, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-159.

8. R.E. Ward, “Authoritarianism as a Factor in Japanese Modernization,” in J.L. Finkle and R.W. Gable eds., *Political Development and Social Change* (New York: Wiley, 1966).

9. E. Staley, “The Role of the State in Economic Development,” in M. Weiner, ed., *Modernization: The Dynamics of Growth* (New York: Basic Book, 1966).

depending on the range of ends and the level of aspirations, the speed of growth to be achieved, the nature of the factor and resource endowments, the nature and degree of institutional impediments, and the relative "backwardness" of the economy.<sup>10</sup>

Useful as they may be, these arguments tend to neglect very important structural factors which may contribute to an authoritarian approach to development. Some societies may be more amenable, by tradition, to an authoritarian political culture. Especially in the incipient phase of development, the transformation of such structural pre-conditions may entail enormous social and economic costs which may retard certain urgent changes badly needed and aspired after by the society. Instability may be one of such costs incurred in the process.

On the other hand, however, the development program in itself may embrace inculcation of social-political change conducive to democratic structures while pursuing other more urgent changes. In a case like this, then, a strong central government, with an authoritarian orientation, may be more effective in initiating and implementing major development programs without necessarily sacrificing the socio-political transformation entailing democratization. This certainly requires an "integrated" approach to development.

South Korea's *Saemaul Undong* (the New Community Movement) offers an intriguing case material for analysis in this respect. Therefore, our main purpose in this study is: 1) to examine the structural factors affecting the active involvement of the central government with an authoritarian orientation in integrated rural development; and 2) to analyze the structural implications of the governmental involvement in such a program.

## II. THE SAEMAUL UNDONG AS INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

In our view, the concept of integrated rural development entails several essential characteristics, largely conceived in terms of ideal goals. This goal-oriented approach is taken on the ground that development as a general concept is a value-laden concept.<sup>11</sup> First of all, integrated development is a comprehensive change. It is to enhance change in all of the social, economic, cultural, and political spheres of institutions. It should involve all segments of the community system. Second, it is a balanced change. It must encourage change in all of the strata, sectors, and regions of the society, an even or similar pace within the community as well as among the communities in the larger society. Third, integrated development, it follows, is to be a change with meaningful linkages among these diverse strata, sectors, and regions. All of the above, of course, require a coordinated and concerted effort at development. And finally, on a different dimension, it calls for active voluntary participation by the members of the community and the larger society.<sup>12</sup>

We contend that, though in no way perfectly fit, Korea's *Saemaul Undong* embodies all of these integrated developed goals. And it is a fact that in this newest nation-wide

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10. A. Eckstein, "Individualism and the Role of the State in Economic Growth," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, VI (Jan. 1958).
  11. Kyong-Dong Kim, "Toward a Sociological Theory of Development: A Structural Perspective," *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 38 (4), (Winter 1973), pp. 462-476; H.K. Geiger, "Societal Development: Notes on the Vestments of a Concept," in G.M. Beal et al., eds., *Sociological Perspectives of Domestic Development* (Amos, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1971) pp. 45-69; G. Myrdal, *Asian Drama* (New York: the Twentieth Century Fund, 1968); and Dudley Seers, "The Meaning of Development," *The Agricultural Development Council*, reprint (Sept. 1970).
  12. Kyong-Dong Kim, "Toward a Theory of Integrated Rural Development: A Humanistic Perspective," paper presented to the Fourth World Congress for Rural Sociology, Torun, Poland, August 9-13, 1976; A.E. Havens, "Quest for Societal Development," in G.M. Beal et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 70-93.

movement, Korean government has played a crucial role. Therefore, this paper will demonstrate that the *Saemaul Undong* is a form of integrated rural development, by briefly describing its main features. Then, it will attempt to analyze the major sociological factors that have led to active government involvement. And finally, we will assess the role of government in this particular development effort by examining its effect. It should be noted at this point that due to the relatively short history of this movement dearth of comprehensive and reliable empirical data is a barrier for any detailed analysis. Also, for the sake of parsimony, we will need to be concise in our description and analysis.

In a nutshell, South Korea's *Saemaul Undong* is defined as follows: "The *Saemaul Undong* is a community development movement aimed at improvement of the economic, social, and cultural life of the people and their environmental conditions, through inculcation of attitudes and values of diligence, cooperation, and self-help, cultivation of grass-roots leadership, and through the active voluntary participation of the people in the community. As such, it is a comprehensive social movement which is an integral part of the national modernization effort to achieve stable and balanced development of the nation.<sup>13</sup>

Chart 1. Goals for the Saemaul Undong

**MODERNIZATION OF THE NATION  
MODERNIZATION OF THE COMMUNITIES  
(SAEMAUL UNDONG)**

Spiritual Development (Attitudinal Change)	Economic Development (Modernization of Agriculture and Industrialization)	Social Development (Cultural Change)
1. Inculcation of upright values	1. Income rise	1. Nation-wide electrification, road pavement, & complete communication facilities
2. Materialization of the spirit of self-reliance, self-help, and cooperation	2. Innovation of agriculture and fishery structure	2. Equipment of cultural facilities (home)
3. Establishment of firm national concept and national identity	3. Technical innovation and mechanization of production	3. Equipment of cultural facilities (community)
4. Rationalization or scientific way of life	4. Re-adjustment of cultivating land and enlargement of the cultivating scale	4. Innovation of the community structure
5. Cultivation of wholesome and fresh attitudes to life	5. Processing of agricultural and fishery products	5. Expansion of social security and welfare system

Source: National Agricultural Economics Research Institute, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

Obviously, this definition about covers almost all of the goals of ideal integrated development as defined above. But in the actual process of realizing these lofty goals, there are practical considerations to be made in terms of priorities, sequences, and adjustments. In the incipient stage of this movement, therefore, there was an interesting combination of priority choices. On April 22, 1970, in a gathering of provincial governors and mayors to discuss the policies to deal with drought disaster, President Park Chung Hee of the Republic delivered a speech which was to become the original kindling for the *Saemaul Undong*. He said Farmers who lament over their miserable fortune, who reproach the government for their poverty, and who blame others for their poverty can never stand up...

13. National Agricultural Economics Research Institute, *A Study of the Saemaul Undong and Structural Change of Korean Rural Society* (in Korean: NAERI Research Report Series no. 68, July 1975), p.7.

If we all work hard to nurture our own village with our own two hands, with the spirit of self-help and self-reliance, I am confident that all our villages will soon turn out to be prosperous and tidy communities. We might as well call this movement the *Saemaul* (new community) Nurturance Movement."<sup>14</sup> Note that in this remark there is a desire and urgency to eradicate rural poverty closely blended with the need to enhance the attitudinal element of self-help and self-reliance. There is also a concern over the environmental conditions of rural life.

Now, the question was implementation of these ideas into action. Since the most urgently needed goal of immediate concern was to close the income gap between the rural and urban sectors, the very first pilot project proposed and executed on a nation-wide scale was to mobilize the idle rural populace during the off-season to engage in village improvement tasks with respect to tidying up the physical environment for the sake of utility and convenient living and creation of productive bases. Implicit in this pilot project was the attempt to test the water in regard to the possibility of arousing the attitude of self-help and the enthusiasm for voluntary participation on the part of the villagers. Thus, for the first time in the history of this nation, government distributed 335 cost-free bags of cement to each of approximately 32,000 villages around the country, during the period of October 1970 and June 1971. The cost of the cement alone amounted to around eleven million dollars. Each and every village was then urged to strive for the best use of the cement to build roads, bridges, banks of the river, retaining walls, or community laundry facilities. At the end of this initial nine-month period, when the government estimated the total output, it was elated to find out that the values of these village improvement works turned out to be nearly three times the initial investment, \$32,600,000.<sup>15</sup>

However, the evaluation revealed a hitch in this effort; this enormous result was not achieved evenly among all the participating villages. Further analysis indicated that the quality of indigenous village leadership was crucial in the success or failure in the first pilot project. At this point, upon the request of President Park, a comprehensive plan for a new nation-wide movement was drawn up and at the acceptance of the plan by the President it came to be the master framework of the *Saemaul Undong*.<sup>16</sup>

Reflecting the lesson learned from the trial project, one of the first main features of this movement was to establish the Farmers Training Center, later re-named as the *Saemaul* Leaders Training Institute, in January 1972. The principal objective of this Institute is to induce changes in the attitudes and values of *Saemaul* leaders by infusing the *Saemaul* spirit, rather than imparting of technical information regarding agriculture.<sup>17</sup>

The next central consideration that entered into the plan was to mobilize human and material resources without coercive measures; it required an organizational strategy. Since we will touch upon the administrative apparatus of the government in the next section, we will focus on the grass-roots of organization in this context. This involves two aspects of organization: cooperative community participation and grass-roots democracy, on the one hand, and cultivation of indigenous leadership, on the other.

In order to assure cooperative and voluntary participation, careful analysis of the traditional structural characteristics of Korean society was made. It was recognized that the family and kinship ties are still very strong and intact, despite the rapid socio-economic transformation experienced in the past few decades. Korean culture happens to possess a symbol system of the language in which a very significant collectivistic orientation is per-

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14. Korean Overseas Information Service, *Saemaul Undong* (Seoul: 1973), p. 57; and Ministry of Home Affairs, *Saemaul Undong*, (Seoul: 1974, in Korean,) p.639.

15. Ministry of Home Affairs, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

16. *Ibid.*, p.24.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 118-124.

meating in a subtle yet forceful manner. Koreans tend to use the subject "we" in lieu of "I" even in many contexts in which such an expression is logically incorrect. For instance, it is not strange at all to hear an only child referring to "our" parents or a husband with one wife speaking of "our" wife, in addition to the very common usage of "our" home, school, community, etc. Furthermore, confining to rural communities, Korea has a long and persistent tradition of cooperative efforts in the social, political, cultural, and economic spheres. *Hyang-Yak*, a community contract system, used to handle the community-wide issues of ethical and moral nature, and in some cases, various social problems. A variety of voluntarily formed mutual-aid cooperatives have existed for economic and financial exigencies; these were called *Kye* for diverse purpose. Labor exchange and cooperative farm and non-farm activities have been quite prevalent. Village assemblies (*Dong-Hoe*) managed political matters, while village rituals (*Dong-Je*) and kinship-oriented ancestor worship ceremonies have been responsible for religious, social integrative functions.<sup>18</sup>

Somehow throughout the ages, no political regime took these indigenous traditional community organizations seriously. But the planners of the *Saemaul Undong* were determined to exploit them in the positive direction. Yet, in order to utilize such indigenous structural bases for the purpose of social mobilization, a new approach to grass-roots leadership was required. Administratively, Korean society has been organized and operated by the principle of centralization. At the base of this hierarchical organization in rural areas is the *Li* (village) chief, theoretically appointed by the central government, although the actual selection may still lie in the hands of the higher-level officials in the immediate locality. Chosen from among the village residents, the *Li* chief carries out whatever national programs handed down from the central government through the hierarchy of authority. He also serves as the chairman of the *Li* development committee composed of village representatives chosen by the villagers and approved by the *Li* chief himself.<sup>19</sup>

This type of villagers leadership inherently entailed a difficulty of the age-old mistrust and indifference among the residents towards any bureaucratic officials, including their own neighbor, the *Li* chief.<sup>20</sup> Encountered with this obstacle, a new type of leadership was to be promoted for the *Saemaul Undong*. *Saemaul* leaders are to be selected from among the villagers themselves by an assembly of electors representing every household in the community. This was to inject new vitality into the social organization of the community. Since they are not part of the bureaucratic hierarchy but "their own people," they are to become the center of voluntary participation and democratic decision-making on the grass-roots level. In effect, this arrangement was to reflect the traditional, though rudimentary, form of village democracy and cooperation.<sup>21</sup>

In each village, there are one male and one female *Saemaul* leaders, to insure division of labor along the sex line. But to make sure this approach works for the benefit of the community and the broad ideals of this movement, specific guidelines were provided for the selection of the leaders, and the selected leaders have been undergoing constant training at the central Training Institute mentioned earlier and by incessant reminders through

18. Korean Rural Sociological Association, *Rural Sociology* (Seoul: Minjosa, 1965, in Korean); Korean Overseas Information Service, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-20; and Man-Gap Lee, *The Social Structure of Korean Village and Its Change* (Seoul; Seoul National University Press, 1973, in Korean).

19. Byong Man Ahn, "A Study of Development of the Rural Community in Korea," (in Korean) unpublished Master's thesis (Seoul National University, Seoul, 1967), pp. 15-21.

20. Korean Rural Sociological Association, *op. cit.*, and V.S.R. Brandt, "Socio-Cultural Aspects of Political Participation in Rural Korea," paper presented to the Conference on Political Participation in Korea, University of Washington, Seattle, February 1975.

21. Korean Overseas Information Service, *op. cit.*; and Ministry of Home Affairs, *Saemaul Undong Guidelines* (Seoul, 1975, in Korean), pp. 1062-1065.

regular local and national conferences. The qualities of competent *Saemaul*-leaders expected and repeatedly reinforced include thorough inculcation of the *Saemaul* spirit of diligence, cooperation, and self-help, exemplary to the fellow villagers by demonstrating integrity and self-sacrificing attitude; trustworthiness; persuasive ability with self-confidence; pioneering spirit and creativity; a strong sense of mission with the consciousness of collective destiny; and democratic outlook.<sup>22</sup>

Because they are not paid bureaucrats, their self-sacrificing, altruistic, compassionate, and collectivistic orientation is most intensely stressed. Nonetheless, their service does not go without rewards and compensation. To successful and effective *Saemaul* leaders, incentives are offered in numerous ways, besides, of course, their own personal satisfaction of leadership and achievement. Often, *Saemaul* leadership is a direct and most effective shortcut to national status in the political and bureaucratic arena. Honorific awards with prizes and national acclaim are offered to exceptionally good leaders. They may enjoy privileges of discounted rates for official trips. They can qualify for special loans from the government for deserving personal businesses or projects. They may obtain direct financial assistance from the government for the education of their children. And last but not least important from the point of view of the efficiency in carrying out the *Saemaul* programs, they have the privilege of not having to rely on the regular administrative channel for communication, to avoid the red-tape. Direct contact is available up to the provincial governors and ministers in case certain urgent grievances or business matters are needed to be heard.<sup>23</sup>

Now, let us briefly discuss the substantive elements and the processual dynamics of this movement. Under the broad goals of spiritual development or attitudinal innovation, economic development or modernization of agriculture and industrialization, and social development or cultural innovation (see Chart 1 for details), this movement encompasses a horde of specific action programs. These programs are categorized into six major classes: 1) basic *Saemaul* nurturance projects chiefly oriented to environmental improvements; 2) projects to create productive economic bases, covering such areas as farmland, irrigation, farm roads, communication facilities, financial and marketing facilities, fishery facilities, and other cooperative trial projects; 3) projects to increase income through agricultural improvement, cooperative farming and other productive activities, *Saemaul* factories, other non-farm activities including fishing, and specialized cash crop farming; 4) afforestation and forest management; 5) welfare programs embracing housing construction and improvement, relocation projects, mobile public health facilities, projects for isolated islets and archipelago, and other special area projects; and 6) attitudinal innovation and change-in-life-style projects which include promotion of savings, family planning and women's classes, diet innovation, child-care centers, college students' service programs, training and education of *Saemaul* leaders and other related personnel in every sphere, technical information dissemination, and other public relations activities.<sup>24</sup>

This lengthy list is merely intended to demonstrate comprehensiveness of the movement in substantive terms. It is truly a multipurpose, multifaceted program. But the question here is how such diverse programs are organized, selected, and executed. Once again, the direct role of the government will be deferred for later discussion. One very illuminating approach by the planners, however, is found in the classificatory and sequential process. In the course of execution of this movement, they came to recognize the need for a typological and stage-wise approach in view of the characteristics of each village. Its central

22. *Ibid.*

23. Informal accounts gathered through conversations and newspaper reports.

24. National Agricultural Economics Research Institute, *op. cit.*, p. 22; and Ministry of Home Affairs, *op. cit.* (1974), pp. 126-137.

tenet was to assess the degree of self-preparedness of each community and promote programs most appropriate to the situation. No doubt, the most obvious criterion of this preparedness was the availability of common funds to be expended for certain specific projects. However, strong emphasis was placed on other qualities of the village, such as indigenous leadership, organizational readiness, and most importantly, the willingness of the people to improve their own lot and their determination to become self-sufficient. According to these criteria, three main types of villages were identified: Basic (or undeveloped) villages; Self-helping (developing) villages; and Self-Reliant, Self-Sufficient (or developed) villages.<sup>25</sup>

The basic yet undeveloped villages, which are considered to lack leadership, organization, and essential indigenous resources, are to require educational and financial assistance from the government to initiate self-help projects. The emphasis in this case is placed on relatively simple and basic programs of environmental betterment and creation of necessary infrastructure for further development. The self-helping or currently developing villages are urged to be primarily concerned with expansion of infrastructure and increase of income. Even though these are the villages equipped with the necessary leadership and organizational capability to identify and carry out the basic village improvement projects, they still are in need of financial resources to materialize them, and hence of some governmental support. And finally, the self-reliant villages are expected to be able to raise their level of income substantially and move on to welfare-type programs. These villages are recognized for their success in the basic environmental improvement tasks initially started, in the economic growth projects taken up subsequently, and even in achieving some degree of financial viability to enable them to go ahead with further development projects of their own choice on their own.<sup>26</sup>

From the above observation, it is to be emphatically noted that there is a shift of emphasis on varying types of specific programs depending on the characteristics of the villages involved. And this identification and recognition of village-specific features and readiness constitutes the underlying theme of selection projects on the community level. To fulfill the ideal of voluntarism crucial to the whole movement, each village is charged with the responsibility for the selection as well as execution of specific tasks. At the outset, the *Saemaul* leader is urged to make all the decisions in this regard on the basis of general consensus among the members of the community as much as possible. The selection of the project should be made always in connection with commonly felt needs and deeply expressed concerns of the village residents themselves. Unique ecological, economic, social, and other characteristics of each community ought to be taken into account to insure realistic decisions. All this effort reflects the desire of the national leaders to provide a training ground not only for community unity and integration but also for democratic decision-making and voluntary participation.<sup>27</sup>

What fruits has this movement thus far reaped, how effectively, will be shortly examined. But in all this, what has the government been doing needs be briefly analyzed.

### III. THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

As might have already been grasped, perhaps still indirectly, by the discussion above, Korean government has not merely been the igniting force and active initiator but also a helpful partner in this movement. However, our main interest in this discussion does not

25. Ministry of Home Affairs, *op. cit.* (1974), pp. 28-29; and Korean Overseas Information Service, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-48.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Korean Overseas Information Service, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-36.



lie in detailed description of such roles. Instead, we will try to show what sort of sociological factors have brought about such a decision on the part of government. In doing this, it seems necessary to go into an overview of the historical background and major structural pre-conditions of Korean society.

Korea, historically, has been an agrarian society, with much of its social structural and cultural ramifications. The mass of peasantry, while having been the mainstay of productive force, seems to have always been the most suffered element of the society. They were exploited by the ruling gentry class in the pre-modern era, again by the Japanese colonial policies during the pre-war period. Despite the unprecedented effort by the independent republic to reform the traditional-colonial land tenure system, the war of 1950-53 and the hasty recovery from its aftermaths still had left the rural sector in the backwater of change. The sixties has been marked by a frantic attempt to industrialize the economy and in fact, Korea has achieved remarkable growth in this decade. This has been led by the manufacturing sector of the industry, which, in turn, was supported by skyrocketing rise in exports. In the heat of tremendously rapid industrialization, however, the agricultural sector and the rural communities have once more been left behind.<sup>28</sup>

Although we reject the popularly held notion that peasants and farmers are inherently unwilling and unable to better their own life, their lack of motivation, their deep sense of mistrust towards outsiders and particularly officials, their apathy and indifference, their apparent resistance to change, especially induced from the outside, and the whole other gamut of negativism and passivism can be readily understandable under the circumstances. And this has been no exception in Korea<sup>29</sup>.

This might have been one of the reasons why many previous rural development programs have been anything but failure. Yet, this very tendency of passivity is the fundamental source of the necessity to exert external intervention. No doubt, this external agent needs not be confined to the government; it can be any outside force. We will, therefore, attempt to identify some major factors to explain the reason why, in Korea, the government, in part, has had to take the initiative and, in part, has been the most appropriate agent for such an active role.

To begin with, some broad generalizations may be made regarding the traditional structural and cultural orientations that have been prevalent in Korean society. One of the most influential factors that have affected the nature of social structure and ideology of human relationship has been Confucianism. This has inculcated in this society, among others, authoritarian personality, hierarchical social relationships, and elitism, confounded by moralistic obligation and collective particularism embodied in the strong kinship ties and familism.<sup>30</sup>

These features have been then translated into the political culture. The power structure and administrative-bureaucratic organizations are highly centralized. Due to the moralistic approach to politics rather than professionalism, this culture favors strong leadership of benevolent paternalistic quality. Because of the tightly knit social structural tendencies, open conflict is shunned lest it may be disruptive and violent. Even though popular parti-

28. Kyong-Dong Kim, "Social Change in South Korea," *Journal of Korean Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (January 1975), pp. 3-15.

29. E.R. Wolf, *Peasants* (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: 1966); J.M. Potter, *et al.*, eds., *Peasant Society* (Boston: Little Brown, 1967); Korean Rural Sociological Association, *op. cit.*; and Seung-Gyu Moon, *Changing Korean Society* (in Korean, Taegu: Kyongbuk National University, 1966).

30. Kyong-Dong Kim, "A Study of the Confucian Values in Korea," in *Collected Papers in Commemoration of Professor Dr. Sangbeck Lee on His 60th Birthday* (Seoul: Eulyoo, 1964, in Korean), pp. 333-368.

icipatory decision-making is encouraged and practised, the final authority of the elite is seldom questioned. Social status, whether ascribed or achieved, is not to be lightly breached, even in everyday language. More specifically on the rural village level, there is a deep-rooted disdain for politicians running for election and a general lack of interest in the electoral process itself.<sup>31</sup>

It goes without saying that these statements are necessarily sweeping generalizations and some significant changes have been under way in the recent decades, particularly under the surging Western influences. The urban, the young, the better educated, and the upwardly mobile have been relatively more susceptible to these changes. Nevertheless, insofar as the centralized governmental processes and the authoritarian political decision-making are concerned, even these elements have come to accept or tolerate such practices, especially if they are wrapped in the nationalistic, collectivistic, and moralistic guise. The rural, the old, the less-educated, and the lowly in status, on the other hand, have not only been less amenable to the changes but they have shown some degree of annoyance in too much of them. To these elements, as long as the political leader and his government seemingly is capable of taking care of their livelihood, the political system in itself is less essential and more or less irrelevant. No doubt, they also are strongly inclined to support any morally decent leadership, regardless of the form of government.<sup>32</sup>

Against this backdrop of structural characteristics or pre-conditions, let us now concentrate on the more immediate background of rural development efforts in Korea. Korea's experience with concrete forms of rural development action programs actually dates back to the Japanese period. In 1932, the Japanese colonial authorities launched a movement called the "Self-Help Movement for the Revival of Agriculture" under the banner of leading the farmers by spiritual teaching and careful and kindly guidance in forming their methods of livelihood. Evidently, this was motivated not so much by genuine concern for the farmers of Korea as the Japanese imperialistic interest. And it was never able to mobilize the farmers despite their coercive, militaristic techniques.<sup>33</sup> Besides the partially successful land reform program, the fifties saw initiation of two rural development programs by the government. One was the establishment of unified government apparatus for rural extension services, originally taken over from the U.S. Military administration. And the other was inception of Community Development projects in cooperation with the U.S. government.<sup>34</sup>

Even if the present regime of President Park has expanded and improved these programs, particularly the former, their effect has been limited at most and superficial, especially in the case of the latter. The crucial defect of these projects and programs may be detected in the lack of the sense of direction and vision in integrated development efforts. Apparently, while concentrating on the incipient industrialization path for economic growth, both resources and energy were running out on any substantial rural development plans. It was only in the beginning of the seventies when the economy has reached a level of take-off and been ready for more balanced development that the political leadership has been able to pay serious attention to the urgency of comprehensive rural development. Put it quite bluntly, as would be reasonably expected of any nation struggling to take off, it was necessary to put out the fire on your own feet before you began to splash water on your neighbor's. It was under these circumstances that the idea of the *Saemaul*

31. Brandt, *op. cit.* Man-Gap Lee, *op. cit.*

32. *Ibid.*

33. Government General of Chosen, *Thriving Chosen* (Korea), (Seoul: 1935).

34. Il Chul Kim, "Rural Development," in Korean Rural Sociological Society, *op. cit.*, pp. 288-292.

*Undong* was conceived and born.<sup>35</sup>

By definition, the *Saemaul Undong* is a comprehensive social movement, a development program, and a community organization effort. As all of these, it would have required leadership, ideology or code of values, resources, both human skills of planning and material, organizational capacities, recruitment, mobilization, and participation of members.<sup>36</sup> Theoretically, however, such a movement could have been initiated and implemented by any non-governmental agents. Yet, besides the structural pre-conditions examined earlier, which certainly have provided fertile soil for direct governmental intervention, the only viable source of all of these requirements still lay in the government.

It was President Park, himself the national leader, who provided the leadership. No one will doubt that Korea has a number of competent men of ideas among her intellectuals who would have had similar ideas and ideals. But it was President Park who commanded resources and organizations, and even the ideas of the intellectuals in the position of advising him on these matters.

Government bureaucracy under his direction was immediately and effectively mobilized to embark on a pilot project, to assess its results, and to draw up a master plan for a national movement. This is the bureaucracy that has successfully managed three five-year economic development plans to accomplish what the world has seen in this nation. It is the government, with the aid of the intellectuals, that carries out formulation and dissemination of the *Saemaul* ideology. The government provides necessary financial and material investment for the projects of this movement. Various technical training and assistance is emanating from the government. The task of coordination and clearinghouse is being performed by a government agency. But mention of government must stop here. When it comes to the actual process of selection and implementation of specific projects, resource mobilization, and particularly organizational dynamics which is the most essential element of this whole movement, the role of government rapidly fades away, as we have already described earlier.

In fact, if one looks at the proportion of investment counting in labor service as well as other material contributions in cash and in kind, more than two thirds are drawn from the villages themselves, not from the government. Recently, even voluntary contributions from public and civil organizations, enterprises, and private citizens flow into the general stock of funds for this rural development movement. The share of this type of contribution may be small (1.4% of the total investment in 1974), but its significance goes beyond the visible material consequences.<sup>37</sup>

Apparently, government cannot do it all; it should not. This restriction is eminently important for this kind of social movement, one of whose ideals specifically calls for voluntary participation of the populace, and one of whose purposes entails inculcation of grass-roots democracy appropriate to the Korean situation. As the villages move ahead with the goal of achieving self-reliance, the role of government is envisioned to diminish significantly. This has already been revealed in our earlier discussion of the typological-sequential approach.

#### IV. IMPLICATIONS

According to the currently available government statistics, as of the end of 1974, all of

35. Korea Overseas Information Service, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-11.

36. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959); R.R. Mayer, *Social Planning and Social Change* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972); and G. Zaltman *et. al.*, eds., *Creating Social Change* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1972).

37. Ministry of Home Affairs, *op. cit.* (1974), pp. 52-53.

Table 1. **The Saemaul Undong Accomplishments: 1971-1974.**

Accomplishments	Unit	1971	1972	1973	1974
Participated Villages	number	33,267	22,708	34,665	34,665
Participants	1,000	7,220	32,000	62,280	106,852
Projects	1,000	385	320	1,093	1,099
Government Support (A)	million \$	8.2	7.2	34.2	61.6
Total Output (B)	million \$	24.4	63.2	192.2	265.6
Ratio (B/A)	times	3.0	8.8	5.6	4.3

Source: National Agricultural Economics Research Institute, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

the 34,665 villages in the nation have participated in the *Saemaul Undong*, involving the total number of persons over the four year period of more than 215 million, with the annual average of about 54 million people—the 1970 census count of the total population in South Korea was 31,435,000. On the average, over 7,000,000 projects were undertaken every year, with the total government investment amounting to \$111,200,000 during that interval. The government estimate of the total output from this investment was five times in value.<sup>38</sup>

In terms of the sequential re-classification made on the basis of the village typology, adjusted annually since 1973, there is a significant shift from the basic, through the self-helping, to the self-reliant types (Table 2).<sup>39</sup> Even though the ratio of the average income of farm household to that of urban working family has been gradually rising in the past decade, a significant jump in this ratio has been experienced since 1971, reaching 87.1% by 1973 from 60.1% in 1967 (Table 3).<sup>40</sup> These are some of the objective indicators of the direct and indirect consequence of the *Saemaul Undong*. But even impressionistic observations of some outside observers, including foreign journalists and scholars, have witnessed visible signs of improvement in the rural environment, living standards, and life styles.<sup>41</sup>

Table 2. **Number and Proportion of Villages by Developmental Typology 1973-75**

Village Type	1973	1974	1975*
Basic (undeveloped)	18,415(53.1%)	10,656(30.8%)	6,165(17.8%)
Self-Helping (developing)	13,943(40.2%)	19,763(57.0%)	21,500(62.0%)
Self-Reliant (developed)	2,307(6.7%)	4,246(12.2%)	7,000(20.2%)
Total	34,665	34,665	34,665

\*Projected estimates

Source: National Agricultural Economics Research Institute, *op. cit.*, p.28; Ministry of Internal Affairs, *Saemaul Undong Korea* (Seoul, 1975), p.29.

Table 3. **Average Annual Incomes of Farm and Fishery Households and Urban Working Households: 1967-1973 (U.S. \$)**

Household Type	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Farm & Fishery (A)	542	637	715	811	952	1072	1242
Urban Worker (B)	905	1018	1095	1202	1206	1292	1375
Ratio (A/B:%)	59.9	62.6	65.3	67.5	78.9	83.0	90.3

Source: Dae-Hwan Kim, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-53; and National Agricultural Economics Research Institute, *op. cit.*, p.29.

39. *Ibid.*, p.28.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 34; and Dae-Hwan Kim, "Interim Evaluation of the *Saemaul Undong*," (in Korean) in Office of Planning and Coordination, ed. *The Immediate Problems and Long-Term Strategy for the 1980's* (in Korean; Prime Minister's Office, Seoul, 1975).

41. V. Brandt, "New Community Movement," in *Saemaul Undong* (Seoul: Seoul Shinmun Daily, 1973); and Korea Information Service, ed., *Korea Seen From Abroad* (Seoul, 1975), ch.6.

Thus far, only a handful of village level surveys are available. One common thrust of findings in all these micro-analytic studies, however, is the unmistakably high proportion of villagers expressing favorable attitudes towards the movement itself, the immediate effects of their specific projects on their living conditions and value-orientations, the need for this movement, willingness to participate, and the actual effectiveness of programs. Of course, there is a minority of villagers clearly letting it be known that they are indifferent, disgruntled, and unwilling to cooperate, mainly because many programs have either been superficial, irrelevant to their primary needs, or been unable to muster the necessary integrative cooperation of the residents.<sup>42</sup>

Interestingly, a couple of these surveys have reported some systematic variations by the type of villages classified not only according to the three development stages but also by the socio-economic status level of the respondents. As expected, with respect to most of the above mentioned attitudes, the relatively developed, self-reliant villages were reported to have larger percentages of respondents with favorable attitudes.<sup>43</sup> Since one survey contains a very illuminating finding, let us refer to it here, in some detail, as an example. This survey asked the individuals to assess the effect of various *Saemaul* projects specifically in terms of direct and immediate material physical benefits. Systematic variations have been noted in two aspects. While more than two thirds of the upper-economic status respondents, by way of the size of farming, felt that they benefited directly, only a third of farm laborers without land gave affirmative answers. The stark difference in the proportion of these respondents citing the concrete projects that actually helped them appeared in two cases. The upper-class farmers enjoyed greater benefits in the farming area, whereas, a greater proportion of the lower-class respondents saw the benefits in the environmental improvement programs. The study concludes that this may be due to the emphasis placed on the basic environmental betterment projects and due to the necessity for a longer term perspective with regard to more economically beneficial programs.<sup>44</sup>

In spite of relatively short time passed since the inception of the movement, signs of progress are not scarce. One way of demonstrating this change may be to compare some expert evaluations presented in the early phase of the movement and those of fairly recent time. In a newspaper account of March 1972, an interim report was compiled by the Ministry of Home Affairs on the progress of the first year of the Movement. To only recount the problems identified in the report, the list is rather lengthy, including: 1) many projects tend to be largely formalistic and irrelevant to the objective of raising the farm income level; 2) determination of projects often has been so ambitious that some have turned out to be over burdensome to the farmers; 3) many of the projects have stopped at about 70% of the proposed objective, chiefly due to shortage of resources; 4) the level of participation of the rural populace has been low and passive, consequently benefiting intermediary brokers who take over the projects for personal business; 5) the reward system based on achievement has led the villages to engage in sharp competition at the risk of hasty completion of projects for cosmetic purposes or burdensome indebtedness to complete them; 6) many villages have experienced friction between the leadership and the resi-

42. National Agricultural Economics Research Institute *op. cit.*; Hai Kyun Ahn, "Analysis of Farmers' Responses on the Policy of Rural Development in Korea," (in Korean) in *Korean Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Seoul: Graduate School of Public Administration, Seoul National University, 1973); and Environmental Planning Studies Institute, *An Analysis of the Attitudinal Structure of the Saemaul Movement and Its Guiding Direction* (Seoul, 1974, in Korean).

43. Environmental Planning Studies Institute, *op. cit.*, p. 47; and National Agricultural Economics Research Institute, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-61.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-65.

dents because the leaders tended to make arbitrary decisions without consensus of the people; 7) some village leaders are forcing the people to engage in projects without sufficient material, capital, or labor supply; 8) by soliciting assistance from successful expatriates living in the city, some leaders are implicitly encouraging dependency among the villagers; 9) in some local governments, officials have been over-zealous to demonstrate their accomplishments, thus causing frustration and distrust among the general populace; and 10) some civil servants in charge of the *Saemaul* projects take advantage of their prestigious position to spend tax-payers' time and resources on private endeavors.<sup>45</sup>

Three years later, another expert report, based on a survey analysis, provides the following generalizations: despite various problems identified earlier, there are signs of change in terms of clearing up the untidy environment, enhancement of the spirit of self-help and cooperation, closing the gulf between agriculture and industry and gradual eradication of the dependency syndrome. Clearly, the *Saemaul Undong* has been a significant accelerant for social and economic change in Korea's rural communities.<sup>46</sup>

Little information is available with regard to the perceived need for the role of government at this point. The only data appeared in the above mentioned report indicate that the most important factor for further success as perceived by the people still is eager cooperation by the villagers, followed by leadership, financial support, and governmental encouragement. All told, only a third of the respondents seem to feel that more government involvement is needed, particularly in terms of financial assistance.<sup>47</sup>

Since one would still view the present stage of the movement as an experimental and preliminary one, the prospect seems to be that the government will continue to play an active part *vis-a-vis* financial and technical assistance, guidance and training, oversight and coordination, and moral encouragement. Thus far, one of the problems seemingly overlooked by the government has to do with the nature of this movement strictly based on the natural village level without regional and national linkages.

It is true that at the urging of the President, the movement has now spread into urban neighborhoods, factories and businesses, labor unions, schools, hospitals, and even in the government agencies and military units. This approach beyond the rural communities, however, necessarily has been restricted to non-economic, non-material aspects of community and organizational life.<sup>48</sup> Insofar as the rural sector is concerned, nevertheless, still the most urgent development programs are said to be the creation of productive bases in the long-run. And this requires political decisions and administrative programs with a view to regional and sectorial balancing, economic linkages between the agricultural and industrial, rural and urban sectors, through aggressive incomes, price, land tenure and development, and financial and marketing policies.<sup>49</sup> All indications are that the *Saemaul Undong* is making significant stride forward in connection with social mobilization, grass-roots democracy, attitudinal and value changes, environmental improvement, and to some degree rural economic growth.

One most recent report has indicated that the Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery has finally drawn up a program to be incorporated into the Fourth Five-Year Economic Development Plan (1977-1981). This program is aimed specifically at two objectives. First, it provides a framework for income increase in rural areas through the creation of

45. *Dong-A Ilbo* (East Asia Daily), March 17, 1972, p. 6; and Ministry of Home Affairs, *op. cit.* (1974), pp. 138-144.

46. National Agricultural Economics Research Institute, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-11.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

48. Ministry of Home Affairs, *op. cit.* (1974), pp. 36-40; and Ministry of Home Affairs, *op. cit.* (1975).

49. National Agricultural Economics Research Institute, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-11.

productive bases. In achieving this goal, the organizational mechanism entails a regional linkage and balance beyond the village level. At the moment, the plan calls for a division of agricultural districts on the principle of "the right crops in the right place," taking into account the ecological-economic characteristics of each district. And the plans for concrete projects are to be drawn for sub-county level, coordinated upward, rather than handed down from the central government.<sup>50</sup>

Besides the need for integrated governmental policies to promote linkages and balanced development in the economic sense, two sociological issues are to be squarely faced by the government.] On the one hand, the apparent collectivistic orientation of the *Saemaul Undong* may create some tension with the general trend of change in the direction of individualism. As has been pointed out earlier, despite the traditional structural context which embraces some degree of cooperative orientation, more recent social and economic transformations have implicitly or explicitly encouraged atomization of social relationships and "individualism-by-default." Under the circumstances, social mobilization obviously instigated by the government may be perceived as a coercive measure rather than a voluntary mobilization. According to the psychological theory of cognitive dissonance, in order to effect behavioral change which will have the consequence of effecting attitude change, forced compliance may be used. However, even in the psychology of forced compliance, one basic requirement is that the behavior must appear to have been engaged in "freely."<sup>51</sup> This is the dilemma of voluntarism *versus* coercion. To insure truly voluntary participation in the *Saemaul Undong* as integrated development, the government leaders may need to study this dilemma very carefully, lest it may unwittingly cause either the impression of totalitarian approach, or lead to costly social unrest.

On the other hand, related to this issue is the implication of enhanced strength of the grass-roots democracy. The possible tension in this case lies between the widespread democratic practices on the grass-roots level and the authoritarian rule on the central government level. The ideal goal of developing a democratic political culture appropriate to the Korean social structure is a commendable one. We believe that imposition of any specific form of government upon a country with divergent structural features is not only morally unacceptable but impractical. A compassionate humanistic approach may be in order in this regard, which will entail true reflection of the wishes of the people and voluntary participation in the political decision-making process from the grass-roots all the way to the central government.

If South Korea's *Saemaul Undong* is pursued with these outlooks in mind, it would become a truly indigenous and successful social movement and community development of integrated nature, worthy of its ideals. And it could provide a useful perspective on the place of a strong government in integrated rural development.

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50. This plan has tentatively divided the country's rural sector into seven large crop districts, 17 medium crop districts, and 54 small crop districts, embracing all of the 1,471 *myon* (sub-county) which will become the base unit of operation. And the coordinating personnel on this base unit level will be the chief of industrial section of the *myon* administrative office, the *myon* agricultural cooperative president, and the agricultural extension officer in charge of the *myon*. *Dong-A Ilbo*, August 31, 1976.

51. J. Cooper, "Population Control and the Psychology of Forced Compliance," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (1974), pp. 265-277.

〈國文要約〉

한국의 「새마을」 운동 :  
사회구조와 종합적 농촌발전에 대한 정부의 구실

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이 연구는 제한된 2次的 자료를 가지고, 종합적 농촌발전에 있어서 정부의 구실이 무엇인가를 한국의 「새마을」 운동의 보기를 들어 검토하려고 한다. 정부가 각종 개발계획이나 발전사업에 주도적인 구실을 한다는 것은 비단 발전을 겪고 있는 나라에만 국한되는 현상이 아니지만, 정부의 형태나 사회구조적 특성에 따라 그 구실하는 정도와 내용이 다를 수 있다. 이런 관점에서 이 연구에서는 한국의 사회구조적 특성중에 권위주의적 지향과 협동적, 자발적 참여의 전통으로 인하여 정부가 적극적으로 계획 추진하는 농촌발전사업이 성공할 素地가 있다는 결론을 내린다.

그러나, 한편으로는 바로 그 권위주의적 지향에서 나온 정부주도의, 행정중심의 농촌발전 사업은 갖가지 부작용을 지닌다는 점에 주목하고, 사회가 발전하는 과정에서 파생되는 구조적 변화와 권위주의와 자발적 참여와의 긴장 등의 쟁점을 시사한다.

「새마을」 운동이 그 이념에 있어서 우리가 規定하는 종합적 농촌발전의 좋은 모형이 될 수 있지만, 그것이 실제 이루어져 가는 과정에서 생기는 문제 때문에 참다운 종합적 발전이 되지 못할 수도 있다는 점에 주의하면서 정부의 구실을 재검토할 필요성을 강조한다.