

Role of ROK Government in the ‘Green New Deal’ Policy?

The resurgence of Korea’s Developmental State

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Contents

Introduction	3
Elite and Public Opinion	4
Green Growth Policy Process	6
Immediate reaction from Lee’s administration	6
The Rise of Public Attentions toward Green Growth	8
Korea’s Legislative Process and the Development of Framework Act on Green Growth.....	9
Legislative Process	9
Development of the green growth act	10
The Resurgence of Korea’s Developmental State.....	12
Bibliography.....	14

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Introduction

Along with the ever increasing popularity of the idea of rising temperature due to greenhouse-gas emission, the question that often emerges is that is it possible to make a drastic cuts in GHG emissions without destroying our economy? (Krugman, 2010). While answers to that question are yet to be found, our economy confronted by another financial crises which experts considered as the worst since great depression, with estimated rise of unemployed between 18 million and 51 million over 2007 levels (ILO, 2009).

To stimulate both economic recovery and environmental preservation then the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) proposed the Green New Deal which echoes the New Deal program by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt back in the 30’s. The objectives of the proposal was to revive world economy through the creation of employment opportunities; reducing carbon dependency, ecosystem degradation and water scarcity; and put Millennium Development Goals of ending extreme poverty further (Barbier, 2009).

Those were to be achieved through a call for countries to allocate 1% of their gross domestic product on green initiatives.

This article addresses the process of policy agenda setting in the development of Green Growth policy in Korea. It is observed that the new government played a major role in the overall process, seen from the drastic increase in the effort of evoking public opinion by the Lee administration. A paradigm summarized as “elitist planning” under contemporary studies of public policy making, where it advocates collective decisions as deliberate choices from available options made by designated decision-makers (Manzer, 1984)

Such findings demonstrate the developmental role of the state which then contends what Kalinowski (2008) claimed that Korea’s successful macroeconomic recovery from the 1997/98 financial crisis was the result of market-oriented reforms from which inferring that was the last stage of the developmental state in Korea.

Elite and Public Opinion

Pichardo (1995) argues that under specific conditions, elite may become active mobilizers, leaders and supporters of social movements. These movements also engage in shaping and influencing public opinion which is an important target for several reasons. First, given the structure of participatory democracy, the public’s support is critical for passing legislation. Second, the small numeric size of elite mandates of that they at least has the approval of the

public. Third, in actions that oppose other elite factions, the support of the general can be useful.

Furthermore most scientists agreed that public at the end, public opinion influences public policies (Aldrich, 1995; Dahl 1989; Mueller, 1999; Stimson, MacKuen, and Ericson 1995; Page and Shapiro 1983; Smith, 2000 cited in Burstein, 2003). Although no one believes that it always determines public policy it is reasonable to make a claim that, while not very precise, communicates far more than saying linkage exists (Burstein, 2003), which is further that what (Wlezien 1996; Glynn et al. 199 cited in Burstein, 2003) claimed.

This relationship however is threatened by the power of interest organizations, political parties, and economic elites. Align with this is the argument of most scholars since Thucydides that stipulate most people are unfit for self-governance. These are happening for two reasons. First is that most people are awash in ignorance of politics. (Kinder, 1998 in Bullock, 2011). Second that is most people conform readily to the wishes of authority figures even when those wishes are extreme (Browning 1992; Milgram 1974 cited in Bullock, 2011). Collectively, these findings carved its way to give a rise to a common claim of: even when people know about important attributes of policies, they neglect that knowledge and mechanically adopt the positions of party leaders as their own which known as a cue (Bullock, 2011).

The citizens have the tendency to neglect policy information in reaching evaluation even when they are exposed to it. They are rather drawing inferences through the party label. And even the when citizens are well informed, they react mechanically to political ideas on

the basis of external cues about their partisan implications and typically fail to reason for themselves about the persuasive communications they encounter unless those communications are extremely clear (Zaller, 1992 cited in Bullock, 2011).

While the previous explanation is mainly focused on the United States, the fact that Korea has traditionally strong power distribution to the executive even justify that the same situation will apply under Korean setting. In later section, it is observe how the new administration of Lee Myung Bak increase their effort in deliberating the green growth message compared to previous Oh administration.

Green Growth Policy Process

Immediate reaction from Lee's administration

As a response to the UNEP call, Kean Government under the Lee Myungbak administration launched Korean version of the so called Green New Deal which also declared as the policy vision of Korea. The 50 trillion won (around 36 million USD) stimulus package aimed to address two main issues: realization of low-carbon green growth and the creation of employment opportunities.

The Green within Green Growth symbolize the protection of environment, while growth is associated with economic development, this while might seems as directly opposed vision was declared as the policy vision of Korea that will unite policies from different spectrum (Lee et al, 2010).

The long term vision of Green growth will be pursued through the adoption of five year plan for green growth. The plan encompasses a number of projects that were previously announced as part of the green new deal and is an amalgam of several existing and newly designed projects on green growth articulated as part of a mid to long term strategy.

Within the plan there are tree strategies and ten policy directions as shown in table one. Legislators in Korea have been considering a “basic law for Green Growth” which will provide the legal basis for Korea’s green growth Strategy. The law or more accurately Framework Act on Low-carbon Green Growth passed on 29 December 2009 and became the flagship of Korea’s Climate law.

Table one Strategies and Policy Directions of Green Growth Plan

Strategies	Policy directions
Measures for climate change and securing energy independence	Reduce carbon emissions
	Decrease energy dependence and enhance energy self-sufficiency
	Support adaptation to climate change impacts
Creation of new growth engines	Develop green technologies as future growth engines
	Greening of industry
	Develop cutting-edge industries
	Set up policy infrastructure for green growth
Improving quality of life and strengthening the status of the Country	Green city and green transport
	Green revolution in lifestyle
	Enhance global cooperation on green growth

The Rise of Public Attentions toward Green Growth

Based on a study by Lee et al on how the issue of green growth appeared in the newspapers there were 414 articles published from the 1st quarter of 2005 to the 1st quarter of 2009 as shown on figure two below.

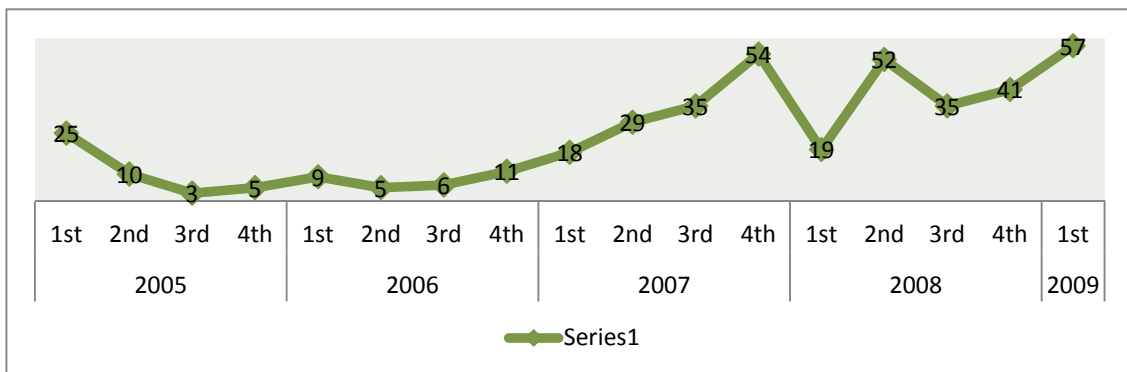


Figure two Appearance of Green Growth Issue in the Newspaper in Korea

The content analysis above reflected public attention to the social issue), in this case the green growth program (Stemler, 2001). Along the trend, there are several important events can be referred to, the announcement of National Strategy for Green Growth in August 2008, Korea's Green New Deal stimulus package of in January 2009 and the five year plan for green growth released in July 2009.

In general sharp increase happened in the same time when Lee Myungbak took office in the first quarter of 2008 and declared “low Carbon and Green Growth” as a new growth engine and Korea’s vision of development for the next 60 years in his congratulatory address

delivered during the 60th anniversary of the founding of the republic of Korea on August 15, 2008.

President Lee has defined green growth as a new economic and social paradigm and will tackle energy and environmental issues, create job opportunities and growth engines, and encompass the facilitation of corporate competitiveness, and revolutionary changes in all aspects of people's lives.

Korea's Legislative Process and the Development of Framework Act on Green Growth

Legislative Process

The legal system of South Korea is a civil Law system that has its basis in the constitution of the Republic of Korea. The constitution charges the assembly with responsibility for making the nation's laws, as well as approving the national budget, declaring war, and impeachment, among others. While the executive and other organs to enact subordinate statutes.

The unicameral National Assembly is the legislative body of the South Korean government. It has 299 members elected to four-year terms and meets in regular 100-day sessions from September to December every year. The president can request that the assembly meet in a special session of up to 30 days (Library of Congress). The power to enact acts belong exclusively to the national assembly and the lawmaking power held by the Executive, etc.

for subordinate statutes is confined to matters delegated by Acts and other matters necessary to enforce Acts (Climate Change Legislation).

Development of the green growth act

Parties inside and outside the legislative branch are all have roles to play in placing items on the agenda as presented on a model proposed by Kingdon (1995) in (Page, 2008). In addition to that, changes of administration, a shift in the partisan or ideological distribution of seats in Congress, or a shift in national mood are also influential factors. Among others, change of administration is the most important factor in the agenda-setting process (Kingdon, 2003).

The change of administration as the driver of emergence of particular political agenda can be capture from the analysis of 580 presidential speeches of the Roh and Lee administration which addressed environment and Climate Change and Global Warming Issues as presented on figure three.

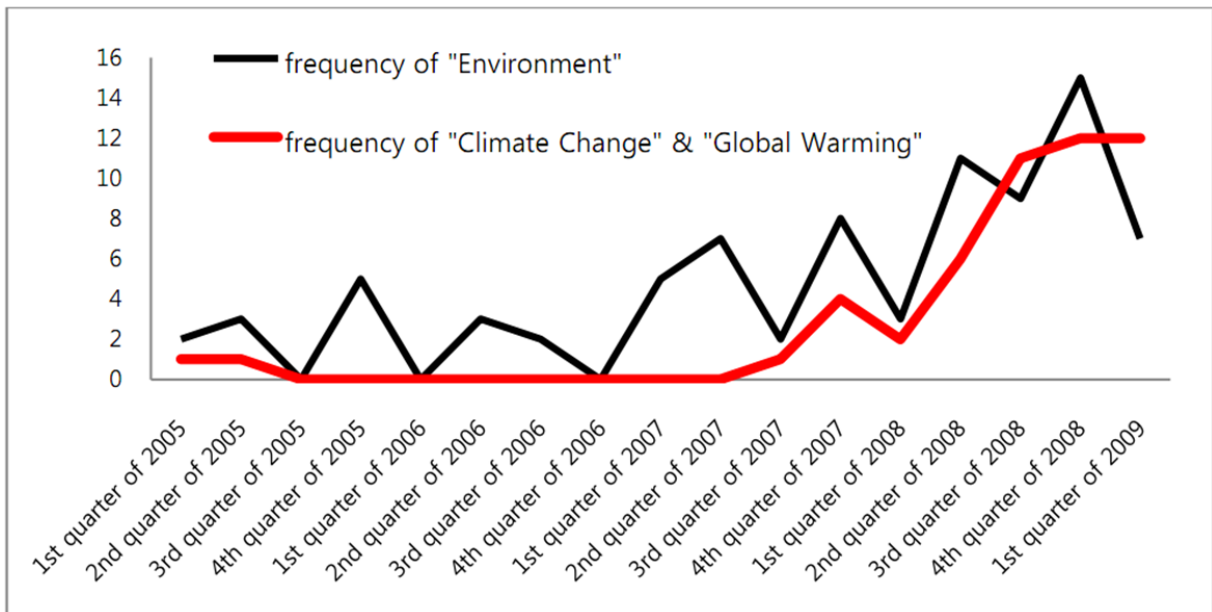


Figure three Frequency of Issues Within Presidential Speeches (Lee et al, 2010)

It is observed on the figure that since the inauguration of Lee Myungbak, the frequency of both Environment and Climate change and global warming issues being addressed in the presidential agendas has been steadily increased.

There is a cognitive map extracted from thirty texts of President Lee's speech developed by Lee et al (2010). Through the analysis there were 25 variables with creating employment opportunities became the most important among all. Those variables emerged from the President's Lee's interpretation of multidimensional crises that Korea is facing in climate change, resources shortage and global economic downturn. As a response to the crises the Lee administration then announce Green Growth as the policy vision which at in turn drives the creation of many significant policies in Korea.

The Resurgence of Korea's Developmental State

As it is relatively new so far there are not enough evidences to say whether Lee's administrations are against the interest of the public agenda. There are no documentation of legislatures opposition towards the framework act on Low Carbon Green Growth. Since the inception in 2008, it took only a year for the legislation to pass in 2009, which then it came into force in 2010.

In contrast United States where its clean energy and security act lagged in the legislative line after facing fierce debate in the congress, competition from alternative bills and objection from the lobbyist. There are however some accusations by interest groups which claim that Green Growth policy is merely a green wash campaign of the South Korean Government. This due to several factors as follows: Low reduction of GHG reduction target; supply focused energy policy that accommodate 32% energy usage increase by 2030; the reliance upon nuclear energy to fuel the growth through development of 12 new nuclear plants by 2022; and above all the construction based growth of the economy (Lee, 2010).

While in many cases leaders may have deliberately misrepresented the public as they mainly focused on their own interests, it seems that in this case Lee's administration might not necessarily against the interest of the people, but may show a genuine concern for the welfare of the majority.

The overall process actually resemble the way "five-year economic development plan" that former general-turned-president Park Chung-hee developed in 1962 to rebuild a country devastated by the 1950-53 Korean War. That drive, repeatedly extended for decades by

successive military-backed governments, is credited for driving the country's rapid transformation into an economic power. South Korea became fully democratic in the late 1980s.

This traditionally major role of government seems to recur. At the time when east Asian economies faced with the Asian financial crises of 1997 Instead of subscribed to the demand of IMF to dismantle its market-intervening structure and liberalize the country's private sector, the Korean state has assumed the new role in the market by becoming the pluralist-supportive model with which the state supported the private sector qualitatively and quantitatively, without liberalizing the private sector. Moreover, the state has kept most of its developmental structure. Consequently, in response to the Crisis and the external pressure, the Korean state has recomposed its role in the economic market in ways that align with the political and historical contingency (Kim, 2011).

Thus, despite the authoritarian state-centered system has been abolished, the main features of developmental state is being maintained. As demonstrated by its strong government executive branch in policy making.

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