Korean Responses to Environmental Challenges: Origin, Drivers and Impacts of Green Growth on Development

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Introduction

Korean Background

Dynamics of the Major Env. Policies in Korea

Low Carbon Green Growth Policy & Responses to Climate Change

Implications for Developing Countries

Conclusion
Introduction

- Korean environmental Issues & responses in the historical & contemporary contexts, and implications for developing countries

- To provide an overview of Korean initiatives, policies and programs that address environmental concerns and emerging climate change issues

- To discuss what other developing countries can learn from Korean experiences of dealing with the environmental issues
Korean Background

- Economic development system (‘development dictatorship’)  
  - between the mid ’60s and late ‘80s  
  - ‘the strong state’, superior in the power relationship  
  - the social structure producing irrationalism in terms of balancing economic growth and environmental conservation

- Public awareness & Democratization process raised  
  - environment movement: pre-history (‘60s-’70s), era of the anti-pollution (‘80s)  
    - era of new environment movement (since ‘90s)  
  - grassroots level movement, participation & politicisation
- **Sustainable Development & Governance approach**
  - encompassing the economic, social, and environmental sectors
  - allowing increased participation of the private & voluntary sectors
  - Presidential Commission on SD kicked off

- **Response to Climate Change & Establishment of PCGG**
  - Green Growth project driven by the Lee Myung-Bak gov.
  - Presidential Committee of GG (since ‘08) carrying out a range of policies and programmes in the fields of Climate Change
Dynamics of the Major Env. Policies in Korea

- rapid industrialisation & urbanisation
- serious environmental problems appeared from the ‘70s

### Economic growth and environmental degradation (’60s to ‘80s)

- **Environmental Pollution Prevention Act** in 1963 focusing on sanitary issues
- Not resulting into effective implementation of environment policies
- **Exceptional environmental policy: Green Belt** since 1971
  - 5.45% of the national territory & 37% of the urban area
  - to hide a range of military facilities for Seoul
  - to reduce rapid growth in population & industrial concentration
Effects of Green Belt policy

- **protection** of agricultural land, environmental & natural resource
- **pressure** to greenbelt landowners & developers
- Since ’97, greenbelt released for development purposes

Relationship between per capita income & env. indicators

- ’inverted U-shaped relationship’: in ’80s, 10 % of the average annual growth rate, industrial waste 90% & CO2 75% increased

In ‘80s, precautionary approach developed

- economic incentive, environmental effects evaluation
Social and Political Responses and Transition in the Globalisation era (‘80s to early ‘00s)

- ‘environmental right’ article enacted in the constitution
  - civic awareness & civil environmental movement enhanced
- ’90s as the era of new environmental movement
  - 1992 Rio World Summit, Local Agenda 21
- Raised to the status of gov. dept. → Ministry of Env. in 1994
  - plural environmental laws system
- Economic inducements: volume-rate garbage disposal system, burden charges, deposit-refund systems
- Environment Monitoring & information systems
Since ‘00s, the transition of environmental policy

- constitution of PCSD & preparations for the global CC response
- PCSD to create a national strategy & policies on SD
- policy integration between the economy, society & environment
- on the basis of governance practices for SD
  - principles of multi-stakeholder participation & participatory decision-making between gov. & non-gov. actors
  - distinguished from the existing command/control mechanism, economic incentives for enterprises
Low Carbon Green Growth Policy & Response to Climate Change – since the 2000s

- GG to create a win-win synergy between env. protection & economic growth
  - the GG initiative Lee Myung Park gov. since ‘08
  - weight on experts regarding specific issues
- In 1992 joined UNFCCC, in 2002 Kyoto Protocol
  - Non Annex I country, increasing international expectation of Korea
  - mitigation & adaptation policies of CC carried out
- GG National Strategy & Five-Year Plan
- Basic Act on Low Carbon GG & Four-River Restoration Project
● Limits of GG policy: going forward or backward?

- In the adversarial relationship with civic env. groups
  - lack of a range of discussions, no attention to the factors of SD
  - growth strategies to secure profits of the industry & business

- Much weight on Green New Deal & Four-River Restoration
  - facing a backlash from a number of civic groups → ‘helter-skelter’ mater plan, a trigger for the Great Canal Construction Project

- Failed to earn social consensus
  - biased human constitution of the head committee

- Re-focus on social equality as an over-arching plan for SD required
Implication for Developing Countries

- Korean experiences offer useful insights
- Importance of early and preventive action
- The democratization process and people’s participation
- Awareness-raising, interest groups, research, NGOs, engagement of intellectuals and media – environmental movement
- Facilitate the participation of and cooperation among people, communities, civil society, NGOs, the business and the gov.
- Green belt policy
- Application of the environmental improvement charges system and a range of technologies and information systems
- Significant fiscal allocations
- Leadership in developing a national strategy for GG
- International cooperation, aid and mutual knowledge transfer are necessary
- Debate between green growth and sustainable development
Conclusions

- Korean society has **unitedly stood up against the environmental degradation** and been able to **create effective pressure on the government and the business sector** to change their policies and programs to appropriately respond to growing environmental concerns.

- Demonstrated **leadership, initiative, significant fiscal allocations and attempted to mobilise** all sectors together to address the common cause.
Conclusions

- Achieving a balance between economic growth, environmental sustainability and people’s wellbeing will remain as an ongoing challenge for many countries.

- While adapting Korean experiences, developing countries need to focus on their own innovations and local solutions.
Thank you