

The Realities and Challenges of the Green Growth Policies in Korea

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1. Background and Purposes

Ever since Korea advocated a new national mission as ‘low carbon • green growth’ in 15th, August 2008, Green Growth policy increasing gains its importance and being highly promoted. This Green Growth policy has gain the attention from the international society since it is expected to be not only more specific than the sustainable development theory but also can be applicable both to developed and developing countries. ‘The report on the green growth of Korea’, as the first national report of GEI (2010,4) by UNEP, was commended as an example of the Green Growth policy in Korea. However, this report stops at introducing policy only to raise the awareness in the international discussions. This research aims to examine the essential qualities of the Green Growth policy by a retrospection of the advocacy of it since 4 years ago.

2. Methodology

First of all, a critical examination on the concept of the Korea was carried out. The definition by Korean government and the difference from the concept of sustainable development and ecological modernization were compared and checked to get a glimpse on the characters of the green growth concept. And then, what kinds of policies are advocated under the green growth concept and a general view on the current level of the policy in Korea was taken on to deepen the understanding of the policy itself. Finally, based on the understanding of the concept as well as the characteristics of the current level of Green Growth policy, this research indicated the problems of the policy in Korea and will further on build a future study on it.

3. The problems of Green Growth policy in Korea

A narrow emphasizing on growth confines the Green Growth policy in Korea. The nuclear energy was honored as ‘green’ only because it is low carbon. And by ignoring the issue of radioactive waste disposal, a principle was made on expanding the nuclear power. Further more, the current economic logic is supported by a less consideration on the renewable energy and even the category of the renewable energy is ambiguous than the international standard. On the other hand, a viewpoint of a social structural revolution for the sake of environmental issues cannot be seen yet only economic interest growth is heated up while withholding the current structure. Korea has already entered a mass consumption structure society. Without correcting the current structure, an increment on the consumption will be further on tolerated. As a result, technological development will be the key for green growth no matter the compromisation it can cause for the increment of efficiency by an over consumption of energy and resource. On another occasion, most of the Green New Deal Projects are existing large-scale public and engineering works while ‘green’ for Green Growth is in name only. Especially, four major river restoration project, one of the Green New Deal projects, contributes to the destruction of the ecosystem such as building dams and digging river floors. These activities are all under the name of ‘Green’.

4. Conclusion

It comes to a question of what is ‘green’ while looking at the Green Growth policy of Korea. ‘Growth’ from Green Growth is well understandable but not the case for ‘green’. An ignorance of the limits of the Green Growth policy as well as an extension of the range of it result in uncleanness of the understanding of ‘green’. Above all else, it is necessary to clarify what is ‘green’ on condition that without becoming a far-fetched argument only for the government, it should come to a mutual understanding with the international discussions and build on the foundation of social consensus on the issues of Korean society. Therefore, it is the participation and sharing of the idea of the people that should be made efforts to lead to instead of a top-down promotion on Green Growth. Only through this process, a chance of a genuine consideration for ‘green’ in Korean society can be grasped to make a meaningful process on the Green Growth of Korea.