

# Major Contents and Issues of Korea's Energy Basic Plan

Ki-Ju Han\*, Ph.D.

## 1. Introduction

The South Korean government recently announced its third basic energy plan, which is the basis of the nation's energy policy. The core of the plan, which will be finalized within this year, is to expand the portion of renewable energy generation to 30 to 35 percent by 2040, and drastically reduce coal generation to cope with fine dust and greenhouse gas problems. The target for the nuclear generation target has yet to be announced, but a reduction target is expected to reflect the current policy stance on reducing nuclear power. As Korea is severely suffering from fine dust and social awareness of the need to reduce greenhouse gases is also rapidly growing, there is basically enough social consensus on the direction of such a basic energy plan. However, the validity of these policy goals has been highly controversial in society due to economic and technical factors.

At the center of the controversy is whether the current administration's energy plan goals will put too much strain on the national economy. While the government argues that the rapid development of the renewable energy technologies makes it economically feasible to expand the renewable energy sources, and that the risk of nuclear power plants is so great that a rapid reduction in the proportion of nuclear power plants is inevitable, there exist strong social opinion which refutes this argument. Adding to the controversy are the recent moves by major countries to ease their existing aggressive nuclear reduction policies. This paper tries to review the current Korean government's direction on energy policy and the main contents on the Third Basic Energy Plan and other related energy plans, and the issues and the causes of the arguments.

## 2. Methods of Analysis

To help understand Korea's energy policy, we first explain the basic direction, goals and background of Korea's energy policy in the past. And then the basic direction of the current South Korean government's energy policy and the main contents of the recently finalized country's third energy basic plan are explained, and the background for which the goals of the basic plan are set is analyzed.

The main content and rationale of the discussion of pros and cons over the feasibility of these plans are then reviewed from a social, political and economic perspective.

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\* Visiting Research Fellow, Climate Change Research Center, Sejong University  
#1116, Gwanggaeto Bldg., 209 Neungdongro, Gwangjingu, Seoul, Korea,  
Tel.: +82-10-4905-7413, Fax: +82-2-3408-4354, E-mail: hankju@hanmail.net

### **3. Results of Analysis**

South Korea's third basic energy plan, finalized in June 2019, has set goals for each of five sectors - consumption, production, systems, industry and infrastructure - under the vision of "Sustainable Growth through Energy Transfer and Improving the Quality of Life for the People."

But the most problematic of these is the production sector, which aims to expand the portion of renewable energy from 7.6 percent in 2017 to 30 to 35 percent by 2040, through a policy of gradual and bold reduction of nuclear and coal power plants and a strong supply of renewable energy. Specific targets for reducing the proportion of nuclear power have not been announced.

The government judges that in order to reduce the amount of fine dust, which is a very serious social problem internally, and to cope with global climate change requires a reduction in coal power generation. It also stresses that the reduction of nuclear power plants is also inevitable in line with public demand for safe energy after the Fukushima nuclear accident and the recent earthquake in Gyeongju and Pohang. Also, it is suggested that major advanced countries are actively pursuing policies to expand the number of decolon bombs, nuclear power generation.

However, counterargument to this policy direction has also been strongly raised. First of all, regarding the policy direction of ex-nuclear power generation there exists a wide gap between the government and the opponents of the government policy on the stability of nuclear power plants and their economic impact. In addition, there has been much skepticism about the policy of expanding renewable energy due to the instability and low economy of renewables themselves.

### **4. Conclusion**

This great debate over government policy seems to be largely due to the following two factors. The first is the issue of determining social values for the value of the environment, and the second is that the objective basis for the impact of policy is uncertain. Thus, unless a social consensus is reached, the controversy over the current administration's energy policy will not be easy to ease.