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**Master's Thesis of International Studies**

**The Role of Gender in the 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century of South Korea**  
**A Nexus Between Democracy and  
Development from 1998 to 2017**

21 세기 한국 젠더의 역할: 1998 년부터  
2017 년까지 민주주의와 개발의 연결고리

**February 2021**

**Graduate School of International Studies**  
**Seoul National University**  
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# The Role of Gender in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century of South Korea

A Nexus Between Democracy and Development and  
Development from 1998 to 2017

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## Abstract

With the South Korean Framework Act on Women's Development in 1996, gender equality was officially promulgated as a national goal with women's policies in the spheres of politics, economics, society, and culture as its main mechanism. It was made clear that women and their advancement were necessary for both a democratic society, and also in one that hopes to further its national growth trajectory. This research uses a qualitative, comparative analysis while adopting a historical institutionalist approach to observe if and how women's policies have varied between liberal and conservative parties of South Korea and between democracy and development after Korea's democratic transition. Specifically, it compares the two liberal administrations of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun with the two conservative administrations of Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye.

It was initially hypothesized that a liberal administration would focus more on the democratic aspects, such as substantive representation and welfare, whereas a conservative administration would focus on the developmental aspects, including women's individual livelihood and those that would promote overall national growth. However, it was found that women and women's policies could not be easily divided into two policy camps based on political partisanship and traditional party values. Moreover, it was found that women and women's policies cannot be boxed in the categories of democracy and development. Even within the liberal and conservative frameworks, no two presidents approached women's policies in the same way or degree as each other. Whereas certain aspects of women's lives oscillated between democracy and development in line with party ideologies, it was found to have later converged giving rise to hope for the future of gender equality in South Korea.

**Keywords:** Basic Plan of Women's Policies, women, gender politics, democracy, development

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## I. Introduction

### The Problem

The South Korean government officially enforced the Jan on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1996. The overall purpose delineated by Article 1 was “to promote gender equality in all areas of politics, economy, society and culture and to facilitate women’s advancement.”<sup>1</sup> Since then, Article 3 Section 1 of that Framework defines the term ‘women policy’ as “the policy prescribed by the Presidential Decree, for promotion of the equality between men and women, furtherance of women’s social participation and increase of women’s welfare.”<sup>2</sup> It is assumed that since 1995, the year the government began to draft this framework, one of the Korean government’s goals was to pursue gender equality in South Korea.

Since the 1996 institutionalization of the legal framework for gender equality, the environment in Korea has indeed been changing favorably for women. Nonetheless, it still problematically lags behind its other OECD member counterparts. Despite the unemployment rate of women measured as a percentage of Korea’s labor force population at 3.6% being relatively lower than the OECD average of 5.2%, Korea ranked first in the category of gender wage gap compared to other member countries.<sup>3</sup> In 2018, Korea’s gender wage gap was 32.5% when the OECD total average measured in 2018 was 12.9. <sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Korea had fewer women parliamentarians (25%) and women ministers (22.2%) than the OECD averages of 28.6% and 31.2%, respectively. <sup>5</sup> Additionally, when comparing Korea with other OECD member countries using the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (total), it ranked 7<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Framework Act on Women’s Development 2014 (KOR) Art. 1*

<sup>2</sup> *Framework Act on Women’s Development 1998-2014 (KOR) Art. 3 Section 1*

<sup>3</sup> OECD (2020), Unemployment rate (indicator). doi: 10.1787/52570002-en (Accessed on 08 October 2020)

<sup>4</sup> OECD (2020), Gender wage gap (indicator). doi: 10.1787/7cee77aa-en (Accessed on 08 October 2020)

<sup>5</sup> OECD (2020), Women in politics (indicator). doi: 10.1787/edc3ff4f-en (Accessed on 08 October 2020)

in 2019, meaning that Korea had relatively more social institutions that were intrinsically discriminatory based on sex.<sup>6</sup>

Although a consequence of many factors, gender inequality undoubtedly rests on a mixture of Korea's developmental state identity along with its embedded neo-Confucian values. Former dictator and president Park Chung-hee intentionally guided a post-colonial and war-torn Korea on a developmental path that has led it to become a successful, economic powerhouse. However, this accomplishment came at the expense of varying social issues. Although women had the ability to work outside of the home and obtain education, it can be argued that women were used as an economic tool to foster growth and development. Since then, beginning with the Gwangju Uprising of May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1987, Korea began to undergo democratization.

The question relevant to this thesis becomes how economic security and stability within the political context of democracy have affected South Korean women. Specifically, what policies have administrations pursued in improving the multifaceted aspects of Korean women? 'Democracy' seems to be a political orientation with values that sharply contrast both neo-Confucianism and authoritarian developmental states. Additionally, this research focuses on women because Korean women have been a part of the civil society that has been a part of the democratization process and aided national economic growth through productivity and heavy labor force participation since Korea's infant developmental stage.

The four administrations from 1998 to 2017 will be the scope and subject of this study. There are two main reasons for the selection of this period. First, this period occurs after former President Kim Young-sam introduced the idea of gender mainstreaming into government policies. Gender mainstreaming is defined by the European Council on Gender Equality as "the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation,

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<sup>6</sup> OECD (2020), Social Institutions and Gender (indicator). doi: 10.1787/7b6cfcf0-en (Accessed on 20 October 2020)

design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view of promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination.”<sup>7</sup> Second, following this pursuit and establishing the legal framework stated above, since the presidency of Kim Dae-Jung, the government has also been releasing Basic Plans for Women’s Policy every five years.

Additionally, the period between 1998 and 2017 includes two progressive and two conservative administrations. Progressive parties in Korea have traditionally been more concerned with social issues, which in the context of women’s policies would include substantive representation, closing social gaps between men and women, and gender-sensitive budgeting. Conservative parties have been more concerned with economic policies. Therefore, within the context of women’s policies, it would be those that would aim to improve individual women’s livelihoods or those that would utilize the women labor force population to strengthen the national economy. By breaking down women’s policies by presidential administrations, this research will be able to not only find whether women’s policies are, in fact, pursued within the traditions of the party lines and to see how it has or has not actually improved women’s lives and gender equality in 21<sup>st</sup> century South Korea.

### Purpose and Aim of Thesis

The main goal of this thesis is to analyze women’s policies or policies aimed at improving the social or economic quality of women’s lives in 21<sup>st</sup> century-South Korea. The topic of women’s policies serves as a nexus between democracy and development because women’s policies do not brazenly pit democracy and development against each other but instate these two as those on a continuum. Although each party and each administration may have its own ways of addressing women’s issues, it may also have multifaceted approaches that cannot be clearly categorized within the boxes of democracy or development.

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<sup>7</sup> “What is gender mainstreaming?” *European Institute for Gender Equality*, (2016): 5. doi:10.2839/76981



This thesis will break down women's policies pursued by the four South Korean Presidential administrations of Kim Dae-Jung, Roh Moo-hyun, Lee Myung-bak, and Park Geun-Hye. The administrations of former Presidents Kim (1998 to 2003) and Roh (2003 to 2008) were progressive, whereas the latter two administrations of Lee (2008-2013) and Park (2013-2017) were conservative. By analyzing primary sources officially released by the South Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, such as the Basic Plans for Women's Policies, and secondary sources analyzing women's policies pursued by these administrations and their party lines, it is the aim of this thesis that it will be able to place these policies on the continuum of democracy and development. After highlighting the major policies pursued by each administration, the plan is to cross-reference the policies with reports instating the outcomes of these pursued policies. Although the Basic Plans and reports written by each administration may have their own plans and findings, it is imperative to compare these findings with the civil society's response.

### Thesis Disposition

The thesis will be laid out as follows. This introductory chapter, Chapter 1 lays out the main problem and the purpose of this research. Chapter 2 introduces the background necessary to delve into the 21st century, including the history of development and democratization in South Korea and the initial push towards women's policies pursued. Chapter 3 encompasses the literature review where necessary themes, debates, and gaps surrounding this issue will be introduced. Chapter 4 details the research design of this thesis, including the research methodology, the research question, the sources used, the limitations and contributions of this research. Chapter 5 will be break down the four administrations and will identify and analyze the enacted women's policies. Chapter 6 will serve as the conclusion for the analysis and overall thesis.

## II. Background

### History of Development in 20<sup>th</sup> century-South Korea: The Developmental State

The developmental state was first conceptualized by Chalmers Johnson to describe the unprecedented rapid economic growth under state-led industrial policies in Japan. This term was also applied to the other East Asian Tigers, including South Korea. Contrary to the weak or predatory state, the developmental state is much more. It focuses on and prioritizes economic growth and implements necessary policies to rein in all extensive economic planning and regulating. Although Chalmers Johnson maintains that one of the characteristics of the developmental state found within the East Asian Tigers was that of an authoritarian regime, in his writings, he did not explicitly state that an authoritarian regime was a prerequisite for a successful developmental state.

Authoritarian ruler, Park Chung-hee, ruled over South Korea for parts of the 1960s through the 1970s. When former President Park Chung-hee seized power through a military coup in 1961, he inherited a war-torn country with a crippled economy. To justify his rule and his authoritarian, repressive tendencies, he had to prove his legitimacy to the Korean people in the form of rapid economic growth and higher standards of living. Through state-led development and policies from ISI to export-oriented industrial policies, Park was able to lead South Korea's economy forward. This rapid growth transformed Korea from an agrarian society to an industrial society with a strictly divided socio-economic class system. During his time of authoritarian rule, he pushed for rapid economic growth through specific industrial policies, which led to Korea's rapid economic growth during that time. The policies themselves and the way in which they were pursued dubbed it the name of a developmental state.

### History of Democratization in Korea

As explored by Hagen Koo, in the 1970s, there arose a powerful movement by the general mass - the *minjung*. A combination of demand for democratization stemmed

from the growing working and the middle class.<sup>8</sup> There were a few reasons that fueled this demand. The desire for democratization partially snowballed due to Park's increasingly oppressive social repression, as seen through the constitutional reform of 1972, the Yushin Doctrine. The other push came from the fact that the growth was not as egalitarian as hoped or expected. This initial push proved to be ineffective because just a year after Park was assassinated in 1979, another military dictator, Chun Doo-whan, took power in 1980. However, Chun's brutal rein kindled the *minjung* movement with great fervor, which eventually uprooted him out of power in 1987, marked with the Gwangju Uprising. This was one of the main events that served as a catalyst for democratization in South Korea. Difficult but successful, South Korea became a democratic country with procedural and electoral characteristics in 1987.

However, whether or not Korea's democracy goes beyond this type of procedural democracy is a contested issue. For example, Lim and Jang (2006) don't dive into the definition of democracy, itself, but point out the characteristics of 'democracy' in South Korea post-IMF as 'free-market democracy.' Through globalization and the US-led, IMF structural adjustment programs, Korea did adopt 'democracy,' but one that doesn't address the disparity and gaps, but aggrandizes these inequalities creating a bigger gap between winners and losers. Furthermore, Lim and Jang (2006) argue that the democratic movement or shift by the *minjung* blurred the notion of democracy in Korea. Rather than having a full-fledged, all-encompassing democracy, what the Korean people wanted more at the time is to step away from the oppressive authoritarian regimes of Park and Chun, and the most viable solution was turning to democracy. From this interpretation, it is clear that Korea's democracy was not built upon the intrinsic values of democracy, but the functioning mechanism behind democracy.

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<sup>8</sup> Hagen Koo, *State and Society in Contemporary Korea* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

### The End of the Korean Developmental State?

The question for the post-democratization period of South Korea is as follows: is the developmental state over? If the premises are that democracy and development are at odds, and the developmental state and authoritarian regimes may often be engaged in a fruitful relationship, then when democracy succeeds, does development have to take a back seat? Numbers and statistics state otherwise. During and even after the reigns of Korea's authoritarian rulers, Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan, Korea impressively continued to show economic growth. Unlike any other developing state in the world, South Korea, since the 1960s have shown a six-by-six growth. Even with the negative impacts of both the Asian and Global Financial Crises, Korea has maintained its averaged 6% growth rate measured in GDP per capita for six decades from 1960 to today. Many scholars, some listed out below, have argued that the developmental state of South Korea is not over. Although the strength or the specific policies pursued may differ by changing administrations, it has been argued that the intentions and method behind the implementation of economic policies were not much different from Park Chung-hee's.

Choi (2010) seeks to explain Korea's democracy and the changed relationship between the state and civil society after the transitional period and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although Choi's (2010) understanding of Korean democracy is that it has been consolidated, he argues that "the role of the state in the economy has never weakened."<sup>9</sup> He argues that the legacy of Park Chung-hee's developmental state or the state's strong grip on the direction of the national economy continued because democracy concerned not with *what* the state does, but *how* the state does it. Specifically, he analyzes that the goal of the social forces or the civil society at the time was not to limit the overextended state but to obtain the ability to vote for the person in charge of overseeing the overextended state. Within his understanding, Korea is both a developmental state and a democratic one because the idea of

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<sup>9</sup> Jang Jip Choi, "The Democratic State Engulfing Civil Society: The Ironies of Korean Democracy," *Korean Studies* 34 (2010): 4.

democracy was focused on electoral democracy. The developmental state was not a political orientation focusing on political values, but the scientific methodology behind running the state.

You-il Lee and Kyung Tae Lee's research (2015) delves into the relevancy of economic nationalism in post-globalization South Korea. Their research focuses on the administrations from Kim Young-sam to Lee Myung-bak. Their piece argues that although each administration pursued varying economic agendas, economic nationalism has been prevalent and the overall economic goal of the state. It can be inferred from Lee and Lee's research that the term 'economic nationalism' can be derived from and coexists with the developmental state. They cite existing literature on economic nationalism. One definition referred to was by Rawi Abdelal, who states that economic nationalism is a set of economic policies prescribed by the state that "follows national purpose and direction and that prioritizes national interests."<sup>10</sup> Additionally, they cite Chalmers Johnson's theory of the developmental state and Robert Gilpin's economic nationalism influenced by the *Gerschenkronian* theory to build their foundation. Stemming from these theories, Lee and Lee's research found that this idea of economic nationalism, a survival tool necessitated by the challenges of globalization, has prevailed throughout post-democratization Korea. Former Presidents Kim Young-sam, Kim Dae-jung, Roh Moo-hyun, and Lee Myung-bak have all implemented policies that balanced opening and closing Korea's economy to protect it, as well as embracing foreign influence. All in all, regardless of traditional party lines, the findings showed that the different administrations in some form pursued statist economic nationalist policies for the pursuit of national interests. Though the developmental state may not be as strong as once was under the reign of Park Chung-hee, these policies were implemented as a top-down approach, and all fell in line with the traditional developmental trajectory following the legacy of Park's developmental state.

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<sup>10</sup> You-il Lee and Kyung Tae Lee, "Economic Nationalism and Globalization in South Korea: A Critical Insight," *Asian Perspective* 39 (2015): 127.

## Women's Policies and Gender Equality

'Gender' goes beyond the biological distinctions between men and women. 'Gender' limits and grants freedom based on social and cultural contexts. 'Gender' inherently creates an unequal society because within the power dynamics that gender creates, the man is posited as dominant and the woman as subordinate. The definition of 'man' and 'woman' is constantly re-enforced by the social institutions set in place.

Within the context of intersubjectivity, how much weight does the meaning that I create for myself have in contrast to the meaning that others have for me? Foucault argues that regardless of the meaning that one may have for his or herself, identity and meaning are structured through power relations, leading to inequalities. Power relations can be enacted to objectify bodies and define those bodies as "visible" and "docile." According to Foucault:

A 'political anatomy,' which was also a mechanics of power being born; it defined how one may have a hold over other bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines.<sup>11</sup>

The political anatomy is created and controlled through what Foucault calls "discipline." This discipline ultimately subjugates these bodies into "docile bodies." Regardless of the meaning that the subjugated may have for him or herself, the subjugator's view of the subjugated is completely different. Foucault discusses a physical manifestation of this type of power relation - the panopticon. This is a strategically structured building in which one would be able to see everyone and everything without being seen. The ones that are being seen are watched regardless of the "seen" *wanting* to be seen or *how* they want to be seen. The seer sees them in

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York: Pantheon, 1995), 138.

however way they wish. Furthermore, the one being seen does not necessarily know when they are being watched. The one being seen has no way to escape, whether from the seer or the panopticon itself. Whatever the seer does do and does not do will potentially be noted by the seer. Regardless of if there is a seer, the one being seen will attempt to behave appropriately as long as the panopticon stays erect. It is not so much the seer but what the panopticon represents that renders the other a docile body.

This dominating gaze characteristic of the panopticon can also be applied to the power dynamics within gender relations. Men and women are both beings in the world but do not live within the world with equal ability to define meaning for themselves. One is always 'the seer,' and one is the one that is always 'being seen.' This leads to societally determined gender roles, discrimination based on sex, and institutionalized sexism.

In her book, *Engendering Democracy*, Anne Phillips seeks out to explore the discrepancies between the seemingly gender-neutral notions of democracy with the stark reality that women face in democratic polities. Specifically, in Chapter 4, "Public Spaces, Private Lives," she addresses the debate between the differentiation of public spaces and private lives and the ramifications this differentiation has on women. Some important questions and philosophical debates on the difference between public and private and what is considered a 'political matter' was brought into light.

Although she argues that there is a fundamental difference between the public and private sphere, Phillips states that the equality between men and women should not be differentiated in either sphere. She argues that when a democratic polity transforms beyond being solely electoral, "the equal involvement of women and men seems to depend on a substantial change in the private sphere."<sup>12</sup> These substantial changes in

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<sup>12</sup> Anne Phillips, "Public Spaces, Private Lives," in *Engendering Democracy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 89.

the private sphere stem from democratizing relations based on sex at home. This divide between the equality of men and women in the private sphere will, in turn, engender democracy in the public sphere.<sup>13</sup> As Jean Bethke Elshtain<sup>14</sup> stated, there may not be or cannot be political solutions to everything occurring in the private sphere, but because of the way institutions shape agents, practices, and culture, it is imperative that democratic polities make an effort to address the concerns of equality or inequality in the ways they can. Phillip's bottom line in this chapter was although there is a distinction between the public and private sphere, it should be democracy's end goal to uncouple the distinction between men and women permanently.<sup>15</sup>

This chapter, along with other parts of the book, builds the framework for the basis of this thesis. It lays the groundwork for why it is important for a polity to address women's issues. Not addressing women's issues isn't limited to women, but affects the identity of a democratic state. From this framework, the research will see how the distinction between the public and private sphere has manifested through women's policies in the four South Korean administrations from 1998 to 2017. By looking into the policies pursued and implemented by these administrations, this research will be able to find which social ramifications were politically accounted for or unaccounted for. It may also be able to find if certain administrations were more focused on the private sphere or public sphere aspect of women's lives. Liberal parties may be more concerned with the private sphere such as child-rearing, parental leave, welfare provisions, domestic violence support, and others. In contrast, conservative administrations may be more concerned with women's issues that affect the public sphere and the overall national agenda and economy, such as access to labor and anti-discrimination in the workforce.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 119.



### Women's Policies and Movement in Post-democratization Korea

In 1983, the South Korean government signed and, in the following year, ratified the 1979 UN *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*. This international treaty set out to list the forms of discrimination against women and urged its signatories to eliminate the discriminatory forms listed within their own domestic territories. Although there have been previous treaties set out by the UN that sought to bolster equality between all human beings and to effectively eliminate discrimination, this was one of the treaties that was written to specifically eliminate discrimination against women.

Part 1 of Article 1 of CEDAW defines 'discrimination against women' as:

any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.<sup>16</sup>

Article 2 states that signatories should make all efforts to abolish discriminatory policies and to instate and enforce appropriate legislation to uphold the intent made within the framework of CEDAW. Not only should signatories abolish and instill appropriate legislation, but Article 5 states that they should take appropriate measures for re-writing the cultural and social stigmas surrounding the inequality of men and women and undertaking the role of educating society on child-rearing as a role common to both man and woman.<sup>17</sup> Other parts of the CEDAW explicitly state the need for states to eliminate discrimination with regards to sexual violence, democracy and representation, and in the field of employment.

Following the framework of the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women*, in 1995, the idea of gender mainstreaming or the

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<sup>16</sup> *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women*, Art.1., 18 December 1979, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#intro>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 2 and 5.

integration of gendered perspectives on all policies, was introduced in the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. With the beginning of this, then Korean President Kim Young-sam set out to incorporate gender mainstreaming in policies striving towards gender equality in South Korea through the Framework Act on Women's Development (1995).

There are many different definitions of 'gender mainstreaming' purported by various international institutions and scholars, but boiled down, 'gender mainstreaming' can be succinctly summarized by Tera Rees' definition. She defines 'gender mainstreaming' as "the promotion of gender equality through its systemic integration into all systems and structures, into all policies, processes, and procedures, into the organization and its culture, into ways of seeing and doing."<sup>18</sup> Because the notion of 'gender' is a social understanding with social implications that can, and most often, adversely affects women, by implementing gender mainstreaming, one can hope to strive towards the systematic breakdown of gender inequality.

Because gender mainstreaming may have different definitions and be interpreted differently, the speed and way in which gender mainstreaming is implemented may vary. According to Seung-kyung Kim, author of *The Korean Woman's Movement and the State: Bargaining for Change*, she posits that "the most important factor in gender mainstreaming in South Korea has been the cooperation between the government and the women's movement."<sup>19</sup> She argues that this cooperative relationship is imperative if the government is genuinely willing to implement gender mainstreaming. One way in which a state can begin to implement gender mainstreaming is through the institutionalization of representation and voice of those that are adversely affected, namely, women. She argues that precisely because the administrations of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun worked with the women's

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<sup>18</sup> Tera Reese, "Reflections for the Uneven Development of Gender Mainstreaming in Europe," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7, no. 4 (2005): 560.

<sup>19</sup> Seung-kyung Kim and Kyounghee Kim, *The Korean Woman's Movement and the State: Bargaining for Change*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 11.

movement and placed those activists in policymaking positions and committees, those two Presidents were actually able to set the path for gender equality in Korea.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

### III. Literature Review

#### Development and Democracy: Either/Or?

Hagen Koo, in the chapter “The Strong State and the Contentious Society,” of his book *State and Society in Contemporary Korea* (1993), argues that as much as the state was strong, the pushback from Korean society could not be ignored. Here, a strong state stems from the authoritarian developmental state under the reins of Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan. However, this legacy of a strong state was confronted by a contentious and rising civil society. Koo argues that Korea’s modern political structure should not solely be categorized as one of a strong, overbearing state, but one of unrest and fervent civil society. He states, “the political history prevented both the state and the capitalist class from establishing stable hegemony over civil society,” and that the “contentious nature of South Korean civil society was both a cause and a consequence of an unhegemonic state power.”<sup>21</sup> The previous, all-powerful and uncontested developmental state had to concede to a form of democracy to be able to remain as not only a legacy, but as we know it today.

The strength of a state is delineated in Eun Mee Kim’s study of the “Contradictions and Limits of a Developmental State: With Illustrations from the South Korean Case.” She defines and measures the strength of a state by its autonomy from classes and groups that may be found within civil society and foreign capitalists.<sup>22</sup> She argues that different types of states, whether it may be different political or economic orientations, may have differing degrees of strength. In slight variance to Chalmers Johnson’s delineation of a developmental state, Eun Mee Kim asserts that not only are there limited and comprehensive developmental states, but more importantly, that these developmental states can exist with a democratic or authoritarian polity. Whereas the Park Chung-hee era fits within the categorization of (i) the

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<sup>21</sup> Hagen Koo, “The Strong State and Contentious Society,” in *State and Society in Contemporary Korea*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 249.

<sup>22</sup> Kim Eun Mee, “Contradictions and Limits of a Developmental State: With Illustrations from the South Korean Case.” *Social Problems* 40, no. 2 (1993): 228-249.

comprehensive developmental state and (ii) authoritarian state, after democratization, Korea shifted towards being a (i) limited developmental state and (ii) a democratic state. For Eun Mee Kim, developmental state was not a political ideology, but a methodology and compatible with different types of political orientations.

Samuel S. Kim argues that modern Korea encompasses a dual identity, one of economic prosperity, relating to development and growth and one of political democracy, at least since the 1980s.<sup>23</sup> Further, he states that the complexities that arise from this dual identity with the mixture of globalization intentionally pursued by Kim Young-sam and forced onto Kim Dae-jung, deepens and provokes the issues surrounding democracy in Korea. He specifically states that “there is an uneven development of democratization because the political party dynamics that existed during the authoritarian period still exists today.”<sup>24</sup> So, how can Korea mitigate the impact of these opposing forces that exist within the domestic and international spheres? Kim posits that gender equality in Korea is a policy area that is not only challenged by this double-sided problem, but also a policy area that can be improved to prove Korea’s successful democratic consolidation domestically and internationally.<sup>25</sup> The issue of gender is ubiquitous – one that pertains to economic growth and political democracy, important to be addressed domestically and globally.

C. S. Eliot Kang, author of the chapter, “The Developmental State and Democratic Consolidation,” argues that “democratization involves a fundamental transformation of the way cultural values and individual citizens interact, not simply institutional changes,” but that democratization does begin with the choices pursued by policy leaders.”<sup>26</sup> By using the historical institutionalist approach to pick apart the administrations of Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung, he finds that the

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<sup>23</sup> Samuel S. Kim, *Korea’s Democratization*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xv.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>26</sup> C. S. Eliot Kang, “The Developmental State and Democratic Consolidation in South Korea” in *Korea’s Democratization*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 221.

developmental state has both advanced and hindered South Korea's democratic development.

#### Literature on Women's Policies in Korea

In Chapter 5 of *Korean Women in Leadership*, scholars Hyoun Ju Kang, Hong In Jeong, and Heewon Ko set out to identify and list out the policies and legislation for women in Korea from the 1990s to 2013.<sup>27</sup> H. J. Kang et al. utilize documents published by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family along with secondary sources on research regarding women's policies that were pursued during that time period. Although the scholars clearly lay out the major policies by the administrations, they do not analyze the policies within a certain scope. This is due to the fact that the scholars are less concerned with the implications stemming from individual administrations but are more interested in the overall patterns towards gender equality for Korea. Additionally, although this piece was written in 2018, the scholars do not delve into the policies pursued by Park Geun-hye, the first female president of Korea.

Young-im Lee and Farida Jalazai explore the women and gender policies pursued by the first female president of South Korea, Park Geun-hye.<sup>28</sup> These scholars do analyze the women's policies pursued within her administration, but by pitting the policies pursued by a woman president with that of her former male counterparts. Their research finds that although Park was of the conservative party, she did pursue more policies to improve the livelihood of women than Lee Myung-bak. However, they found that although Park increased the substantive representation of women, when it came to placing women in positions of power, Park faced her greatest limit.<sup>29</sup> In this light, it was argued that she was a woman president without women.

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<sup>27</sup> Hyoun Ju Kang, Hong In Jeong, and Heewon Koo, "Policies and Legislation for Women in Korea from the 1990s to the Present," in *Korean Women in Leadership*, ed. Yonjoo Cho and Gary N. McLean, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 81.

<sup>28</sup> Young-im Lee and Farida Jalazai, "President Park Geun-hye of South Korea: A Woman President without Women?" *Politics & Gender* 13, no. 4 (2017): 597-617.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 610.

Seung-kyung Kim and Kyounghee Kim highlighted the three legal changes that were not only important to women and Korean feminist scholars, but cited that these fundamental changes are why Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun were highly praised as women-friendly presidents.<sup>30</sup> The three legal changes were: (i) the Law against Prostitution in 2004, (ii) the Framework Act on Healthy Families in 2004, and (iii) the abolishment of the *Hojiu* or male-dominated, family head system in 2005. These three changes were brought on by the active voices of women and in turn, helped change women's status in Korean society. These three legal changes were not pushed by the presidents themselves, but were a response to the demands of various women's movements at the time.

These three legal changes were important in that they were long fought and sought after many Korean women's movements, but more importantly, because of how they contributed to re-shaping the societal meaning attached to women. To a certain degree, these institutionalized changes were able to relieve women of certain statuses, such as sexual objects, the permanently subordinate member in the family, or those that were born just to reproduce. Through these new legal frameworks and understandings, women were finally acknowledged as human beings with certain fundamental rights that are shared by men and women in Korean society at large.

Although these were three landmark changes and a positive step for women, the authors argue that the relationship between even the two women-friendly presidents and women movements were not solely harmonious. For example, they state that "feminist agendas came into conflict with the government's neoliberal economic policies, while the government's 'Healthy Family Law' assumed a narrowly traditional family structure."<sup>31</sup> Women and the women's movement had a two-pronged task. They had to undo the structural damages faced by women from both:

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<sup>30</sup> Seung-kyung Kim and Kyounghee Kim, *The Korean Woman's Movement and the State: Bargaining for Change*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 13-16.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

(i) neo-Confucian values deeply embedded in Korean society, along with (ii) neoliberal economic policies that reinforced structural discrimination against women.



## IV. Research Question and Design

### Research Method

The methodology that will be used for this research is a qualitative, comparative analysis. It will be qualitative in that this research primarily uses primary qualitative sources released by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. The main bulk of these qualitative sources are the four Basic Plans for Women's Policies, which include Gender Equality Reports, gender-sensitive budget analyses, and comprehensive reports. For additional information, it will rely on a wide array of secondary literature that has analyzed and discussed women's policies that were pursued under each administration. The thesis will then compare the four administrations to analyze and evaluate their policies on the spectrum of democracy and development.

Furthermore, this research will also use Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth's (1992) historical institutionalist approach for two main reasons delineated by the scholars in *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis* (1992). The first is to track the "moments of institutional change... the points of departure from established patterns," namely the "critical junctures," to understand how the overall changes by the administrations have genuinely affected gender equality in Korea.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, it will be useful to utilize this analytical framework because of the importance of institutional choice and the choices regarding women's policies that those four presidents made during their tenure. Institutions can change the societal meaning of Korean women, in which Korean women, in turn, can act as agents of institutional change.

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<sup>32</sup> Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longstreth, *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 27.

To organize the findings of this research and research question, the administrations will be plotted on this table as shown in Table 1. This will help visualize the continuum and degree of democracy or development through gender policies pursued by the administrations. The categories are, as follows: (i) low focus on democracy, (ii) greater focus of democracy, (iii) low focus on development, and (iv) greater focus on development. The ‘focus’ will be measured by the orientation of the policies pursued by the four administrations.

	Democracy (Less Focus)	Democracy (Greater Focus)
Development (Less Focus)		
Development (Greater Focus)		

Table 1. Analytical Table

Choice and Study of Materials

This thesis will primarily use legislation, policies, and reports published by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. Since 1998, the Presidential Committee on Women’s Affairs (now evolved into the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family) has released Basic Plans for Women’s Policies. These Basic Plans have been released every five years, aligning each Plan with one administration allowing a direct analysis between an administration and the women’s policies pursued. These Plans were used along with other published reports by this Ministry, such as Gender Equality Reports, gender-sensitive budget planning reports, and Comprehensive Reports to highlight the overarching themes and main policies that were pursued. The outcome reports were used as a measurement against the Plans because as much as certain policies

and legislation were hoped to be pursued, the actual impact will be a determining factor in aiding gender equality in Korea.

Along with those primary sources, this research also relied on a wide array of secondary sources of articles written by the Korean Women's Development Institute and other journals relevant to the topics explored in this research. They were used to gain additional insight of the themes and legislation produced within these four administrations. *Engendering Democracy* by Anne Phillips was used as the theoretical background for the current feminist debates on the relationship between women and democracy and the impact of politics on the differentiation between the public and private sphere. It provided the necessary background needed to build the argument for this thesis. *The Korean Women's Movement and the State: Bargaining for Change* by Seung-kyung Kim and Kyounghee Kim was referred to see the patterns, movements, and relationships between women's movements, women's policies, and the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun's administration. Additionally, the book *Korean Women in Leadership*, by Yonjoo Cho and Gary N. Mclean (2018) was heavily used to accumulate knowledge relevant for many aspects of this thesis such as actual legislation, the trends, and the reality of the impact of women's policies for the studied time period. Additionally, this research used various news articles to evaluate the administrations from civil society's perspectives at the time. Furthermore, as the research went on, other germane articles and books were referred to and used to fill gaps and answer questions that would arise.

#### Contribution to Research Area

The goal of this thesis is to shed a feminist perspective on the policies undertaken by some Korean presidential administrations after Korea's transition into a democracy. Although women were important for both the development and democratization of Korea in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the institutional legacy of neo-Confucianism amongst others seems to have overlooked the value and meaning of Korean women. It is of great hopes to contribute to the current research area on policies and legislation for women by shedding light on different areas of focus by the administrations and their

party lines, whether it be democratic or developmental aspects. By emphasizing and analyzing this continuum of democracy and development through women's policies and possible areas of convergence, this thesis can contribute to blurring the glaring theoretical line between democracy and development. Furthermore, by analyzing Korea's gendered politics, the findings of this research may aid in de-gendering Korean policies to promote true gender equality for the future.

### Research Question

Although the research has been extensively conducted in the fields mentioned above, there seems to be a small vacuum. There is a lack of research on the cohesion or the relationship between the fields. The debate on the developmental state and gender studies in Korea have not seemed to cross paths. All things or factors living in coexistence must have some sort of relationship, whether reinforcing or adversary.

The keywords found above were: (i) democracy, (ii) development, (iii) government interference and guidance, and (iv) women. There is an obvious coexistence between some of these factors within the Korean context. Development and government interference have been the key policy arena for Park Chung-hee, and as the literature states, the legacy of the developmental state is still evident. Since the democratization of Korea in 1987 and after, Korea had to somehow insert democracy within the context of development. Additionally, the issue of women has been analyzed within the scope of democratization, as recipients and proponents of democracy, and national growth and development as pushers and targets of development and top-down government policies. But in actual practices, policies, and reality, what does gender mean, and in which ways has it been manifested, bolstered, torn down in 21<sup>st</sup> century South Korea?

The following is the research question of this study:

Within the continuum of development and democracy, how have the four South Korean Presidential Administrations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, from Kim Dae-jung to Park Geun-hye, addressed women's issues through women's policies, and to what degree have these policies helped or hindered gender equality in South Korea?

### Hypothesis

The core hypothesis for this research question is that the two progressive administrations of Kim Dae-jung and Roo Moo-hyun will have taken a more progressive approach, along their traditional liberal party lines, towards women policies such as addressing social welfare and substantive representation, in contrast to the conservative administrations of Lee Myung-bak and Park Gun-hye will have oriented their women's policies to address economic concerns that women face and policies that would aid the overall national economy of South Korea. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that although no candidate would implement policies that step outside of their party lines, the degree of address may differ. For example, just because Lee Myung-bak and Park Gun-hye are members of the conservative party, they may not address women's issues in the same light or with the same degree.

Moreover, it is hypothesized that the progressive parties will have pursued policies for gender equality in addition to policies specifically for women. Because the conservative parties will have most likely pursued policies that would affect individual livelihoods or national economic aspects, Lee and Park would have shied away from more actively pursuing wholistic policies for gender equality. Using Table 1 shown above, the hypothesis is visualized in Table 2, as follows.

	Democracy (Less Focus)	Democracy (Greater Focus)
Development (Less Focus)		Kim Dae-jung Roh Moo-hyun (liberal)
Development (Greater Focus)	Lee Myung-bak Park Geun-hye (conservative)	

Table 2. Hypothesis

## V. Analysis by Administration

### *Kim Dae-jung (1998-2002): “Ignition”*

#### Background

Kim Young-sam’s first initiated ‘gender mainstreaming’ in Korea based on the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). Shortly after, President Kim Dae-jung inherited a Korea in which there was a pivotal opportunity for women’s rights and gender equality. Since the beginning, his visions for institutionalizing women’s rights were clear and genuine. During his inaugural address, he stressed that he would protect and promote women’s rights and eliminate sex-based discrimination in different pockets of society.<sup>33</sup> Seung-kyung Kim describes Kim Dae-jung’s relationship with women’s movements as “symbiotic,” further stating that it was during his tenure the, “government saw the emergence of state feminism and the rise of feminist bureaucrats.”<sup>34</sup>

In 1998, during Kim Young-sam’s tenure, the Second Ministry of State for Political Affairs was created and given full jurisdictional charge over women’s policies.<sup>35</sup> Soon after Kim Dae-jung’s inauguration, this Second Ministry was revitalized into the Presidential Committee on Women’s Affairs (1998). In just three years, Kim Dae-jung further established his intention of institutionalizing women’s policies by revamping this Committee to a central-level ministry, titled, the Ministry of Gender Equality (2001). Since 1998, the President’s Special Committee on Women’s Affairs has defined gender mainstreaming as “promoting women’s issues in all national policies.”<sup>36</sup> Gender mainstreaming was enacted for all policies in six ministries (administration and local government, agriculture and forestry, education, health and

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>35</sup> Yonjoo Cho and Gary N. Mclean, *Korean Women in Leadership* (Cham: Springer International, 2018), 86.

<sup>36</sup> Seung-kyung Kim and Kyounghee Kim, *The Korean Woman’s Movement and the State: Bargaining for Change*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 12.

welfare, labor, and law) with the goal to build a truly democratic society based on gender equality.

#### 1st Framework Plan for Women's Policies (1998-2002)

Based on the legal background of the Framework on Women's Development, the 1<sup>st</sup> Framework Plan for Women's Policies was created. The main goals of the 1<sup>st</sup> Framework Plan by Kim Dae-jung were: (i) to incorporate gender mainstreaming for a more gender equal society, (ii) to increase women's active participation in society through policymaking and bolstering the economy, and (iii) to promote and improve women's welfare, ultimately improving the overall quality of women's lives.

#### Key Outcomes

The following key outcomes were selected not only because the Roh Moo-hyun Administration selected the following as the main highlights of Kim Dae-jung's women's policies, but because it set the overall framework for women's policies for administrations to come. The key outcomes stated below set the tone and foundation for women's policies agenda not only for Roh Moo-hyun but also for the conservative governments of Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye.

There were a series of legal reforms with those pertaining to women. First, there was a legal reform for increasing women representation in national government committees, within different levels of civil servants, and in military and police academies. He also enacted the Anti-sexual Discrimination Law in 1999 to prevent inappropriate sexual harassment, especially within the workplace, to protect the victims, who were usually women.<sup>37</sup> By institutionalizing anti-sexual discrimination measures, he hoped to grow a collective public consciousness on the malfeasant nature of discrimination based on sex.

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<sup>37</sup> Ministry of Gender Equality, *2<sup>nd</sup> Basic Plan for Women's Policies (2003-2007)*, 13.



Additionally, he staunchly advocated for and supported the increase in women's employment, livelihood stability, and a harmonious work-life balance. He enacted the Women's Business Support Act (1999), built day care centers for women entrepreneurs, and increased paid maternity 200,000 KRW for three months.<sup>38</sup> Kim Dae-jung implemented women-friendly STEM programs and increased awareness of gender equality by incorporating education on gender equality within the curriculum of public-school textbooks. He not only strengthened the welfare and support system for women in business and STEM but also for those in the farming and fishery sectors. Furthermore, he amended the National Pension System in 1998, allowing not only the husband but also the wife to receive a part of the husband's pension.<sup>39</sup> The Kim Administration also pushed for the participation in arts, culture, and other social activities such as volunteering opportunities.

As for addressing sexual and domestic violence, as well as, prostitution, he set in place a comprehensive set of anti-prostitution measures in 2002. His set of anti-prostitution measures served as the foundation for the law prohibiting prostitution that was enacted during the Roh Administration in 2003. He instilled a medical support policy and a national hotline for victims of sexual violence.<sup>40</sup>

He did not only gear gender equality and women's policies to the domestic situation. Kim Dae-jung strived to go beyond borders. He pushed for more women professionals into various international institutions. Furthermore, given his friendly stance towards North Korea and the possibilities of unification, he strengthened unification-related education programs for women and actively supported comparative studies research on North and South Korean women.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 14.

## Limitations

The Roh Moo-hyun Administration began writing their 2<sup>nd</sup> Basic Plan for Women's Policies based on the limitations and outcomes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Basic Plan by the Kim Dae-jung administration. Both known for their active cooperation with women's movements in Korea, Roh Moo-hyun sought to create a road out of the path that Kim Dae-jung paved for gender equality in Korea. Roh highlighted a few limitations, lessons, and room for improvement for his plan. They were as follows.

Roh Moo-hyun cited policies for improvement.<sup>42</sup> Roh stated that there needed to be greater proportional representation, especially for the case of civil servants, professorships, and national government committees. Additionally, he found the need for increasing women human capital within the strategic fields of science and technology. Kim Dae-jung's Maternal Protection System was deemed inadequate for the reality of working women and cited that there needed to be greater public childcare support and infrastructure to help the work-life balance load for women. Roh actively sought to continue the bolstering of public awareness of gender equality and to prevent sexual and domestic violence. He also believed there was a need to continue to integrate women and promote their active participation in arts and culture, not just within solely traditional work environments.

Based on the policies implemented or mentioned by Kim Dae-jung, Roh found four new vacuums that he felt needed to be filled during his tenure. The four vacuums were: (i) internalize and institutionalize gender mainstreaming within all cabinet-level ministries, (ii) building infrastructure for women facing poverty, (iii) to eradicate the outdated and sexist Family-Head system, and (iii) the protection of part-time women workers.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>43</sup> KWDI, *2<sup>nd</sup> Basic Plan on Women's Policies: Strategies and Policy Research* (2002), 15.

Analysis: “Ignition”

	Democracy (Less Focus)	Democracy (Greater Focus)
Development (Less Focus)		X
Development (Greater Focus)		

Table 3. Kim Dae-jung (1998-2002) “Ignition”

Kim Dae-jung’s policies and actions are placed in the quadrant of: (i) a greater focus on democracy and (ii) less focus on development. Because his administration was the first administration to pursue gender equality, it was more focused on the democratic aspects, such as giving women a voice by institutionalizing women’s representation and women’s policies through gender mainstreaming. Although he created some policies that pertained to women’s development, the original goal and the final outcome was about paving the way for substantive representation and creating an environment of respect for women.

It is worth mentioning that Kim Dae-jung’s women’s policies were, to a degree, confined to state feminism. Although women and women’s group were more participatory in the policy making process, women and women’s groups took a leading role, but not in the way they took during Roh’s Administration. Later we will see that Kim Dae-jung’s Administration’s relationship with women and women’s groups was serious, but informal, whereas Roh’s relationship with women was about institutionalized partnerships.

Just by observing the highlights of progress made by Kim Dae-jung for women and for gender equality, his intention is clear. Although there were some limitations and more areas of women's policies that needed to be addressed, he, along with women's movement groups at the time, set the tone and path for women's policies and gender equality to come. Albeit the scope of this research covers only four administrations, in the number of years, that equates to twenty years. With the mark of globalization, the development of the knowledge-based economy, and the rapidly changing demographics of Korea, it is noteworthy that many of the women's policies enacted by Kim Dae-jung were also ones that reoccurred in the three administrations to come. In this way, it is clear that his set of policies ignited a trend and movement for gender equality in Korea.

Although not a limitation inherent posed by Kim Dae-jung, himself, one of the biggest limitations for women's policies during Kim Dae-jung's Administration was the impact of the Asian Financial Crisis on the Korean economy. The financial impact was detrimental for the economy and had adverse effects for women's movements. Women's organization depended on government funding for financial stability. Moreover, because of the size women's organizations, they had to rely on government-sponsored projects for funding, often having to compromise some of their key agenda.<sup>44</sup> This means that when the government had to divert its attention and funds to other areas such as restructuring the labor market and protecting those unemployed that a more aggressive push for women's policies took the back seat. What was more problematic, was that the IMF crisis brought on a financial, as well as a social impact on women in Korea. The neoliberal economic policy reforms mandated by the IMF did not necessarily create a better environment for women, rather the opposite. Regardless, it is evident that the crisis and the impact of was far from Kim Dae-jung's control. Given his situation, the women's policies put forth and the integration of women into the policymaking process, itself, should be commended.

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<sup>44</sup> Seung-kyung Kim and Kyounghee Kim, *The Korean Woman's Movement and the State: Bargaining for Change*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 14.

His legacy of women's policies reverberates throughout the next administrations, even to today.

*Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2007): "Full Throttle"*

Background

Roh Moo-hyun, also from the liberal party, inherited a new path that was paved by his predecessor Kim Dae-jung. What was different this time was that the country he inherited was no longer severely crippled from the Asian Financial Crisis (1997-1998), also known as the IMF Crisis in Korea. He had more agenda-setting and financial freedom to pull Korea one step closer to gender equality. He released the administration's formal stance on women's policy and gender equality in December 2002 through the 2<sup>nd</sup> Basic Plan for Women's Policies (2003-2007). Although Roh's Ministry of Gender Equality and Family officially published the 2<sup>nd</sup> Basic Plan, most of the ideas were reflected of the voices of women activists and scholars. This was due to Roh calling for a 'participatory government,' one that does not employ solely a top-down approach and ideology, but one with an emphasis on active civil society participation, particularly women activists, into the highest levels of policymaking.<sup>45</sup> This allowed the Roh Administration to successfully establish new laws and policies that helped Korea become a more gender-conscious society.

2<sup>nd</sup> Framework Plan for Women's Policies (2003-2007)

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Basic Plan for Women's Policies is based on the reality that Korean women face. The contextual background for this Plan acknowledges that the 1<sup>st</sup> Basic Plan for Women's Policies by Kim Dae-jung genuinely tried to incorporate gender mainstreaming in aspects of government policies, but has had limited effect on changing the actual attitudes and perceptions of those within the Korean society. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Plan states that not only do discriminatory perceptions and actions still exist, but the infrastructure necessary to instill a work-life balance is almost non-existent.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.12

Because of this discrimination towards women still prevails, working women at this time was predominantly seen as a threat to the power relationship between husband and wife within the family.<sup>46</sup> Succinctly, Roh believed that there was still an evident lack of social infrastructure and institutions to combat sex-based discrimination and those to support a healthy work-life balance for women. Roh decided to take and raise Kim Dae-jung's indignation into full throttle.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Plan highlighted six major domestic, regional, and global changes that were having or would have an impact on women. The Plan first cites globalization as both a hope and concern for women. Although globalization would provide more jobs for women along with less discrimination in the workplace due to a cultural shift, it could also reduce the job availabilities depending on the previously held job type. Additionally, it states that it is inevitable that within globalization, the role of the state with foci set in the international context may reduce the emphasis and focus of women's policies.<sup>47</sup> Another key change cited is the development of and full-fledged shift towards Korea becoming a knowledge-based economy. A knowledge-based economy would mean genderless jobs.<sup>48</sup> The last key change that will be mentioned is Korea's demography clearly pointing to an aging society and a change in traditional familial structure.

What the 2<sup>nd</sup> Plan does that is quite different from the other three Plans, is that it analyzes itself, what it can do, and the reality that women face using 'SWOT' analysis. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Some of the significant strengths that it pointed out were the current policies and institutions for women's rights, the strengthening of international treaties for women, the government's growing recruitment targets in varying sectors, an increase of women's human capital, and the active development and participation of women's

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<sup>46</sup> Ministry of Gender Equality, *2<sup>nd</sup> Basic Plan for Women's Policies (2003-2007)*, 9.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 19. 'Genderless job' means a job that is not associated with societally determined gender roles.

movements.<sup>49</sup> For opportunities, it highlights the increasingly diverse family structures, gender mainstreaming, the development of ICT, diversification of occupation and work types, and the increasing demand of women's human capital.<sup>50</sup> However, the SWOT analysis also dissected the weaknesses and threats. The weaknesses included the persistent lack of women representation in politics and administrative divisions, low participation rates of women laborers in the market with the increase of part-time women workers, low employment rates of women with higher human capital, and the lack of social infrastructure to foster the work-life balance.<sup>51</sup> The threats were seen as stubborn institutionalization of Korea's patriarchal society, constant claims of reverse discrimination, polarization between socio-economic classes amongst women, the increase of sexual objectifying women, and job insecurity and the increase of 'women's poverty.'<sup>52</sup>

With the conscious awareness of the reality of the situation reflected in society, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Basic Plan simultaneously was built upon the successes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Plan but also sought to place institutionalized measures for women and for gender equality for that time period and the future of Korea. The main policy goals and visions were as follows. First and foremost, the main goal was the realization of an actual gender equal society, in which the relationship between men and women are not defined by competition, but cooperation.<sup>53</sup> Specifically for Roh, 'equality' recognizes men and women's biological differences, but at the same time, clearly states that those biological differences should stay at that not be translated into differences anywhere else. The second and third goals are to strength the competitiveness of women in the knowledge-based economy and to aggrandize women's representation in all aspects of society.<sup>54</sup> The fourth goal is to promote women's welfare and strengthen women's

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 21. 'Women's poverty' refers to being extremely poor in all aspects including economical and psychological.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 28.

rights.<sup>55</sup> It was strongly believed that it would be through this goal that Korea would become a truly democratic society – a society in which everyone is equal.

### Strategy

Roh Moo-hyun had the advantage of succeeding Kim Dae-jung's Administration because he was working with an already established and institutionalized setting. Because Kim Dae-jung paved the path towards a more women-friendly society, Roh Moo-hyun was able to strategize with efficiency and effectiveness. It seems to be quite evident that Roh Moo-hyun took the limitations of Kim Dae-jung's policies seriously and this awareness is mirrored in the actual strategy pursued.

Roh Moo-hyun's strategy was as clear as his vision. Additionally, what was different about his vision from other administrations was that he sought to implement gender equality from a top-down approach, as well as a bottom-up approach. He upgraded Kim's state-feminism to a participatory government. His ultimate vision was the realization of a gender equal society through four main policy agendas: (i) harmonious relationship within the family, (ii) increasing women's competitiveness in the Korean market, (iii) women representation in all fields of society, and (iv) strengthen and protect women's rights and welfare. He sought to achieve his vision through these broad policy agendas through gender mainstreaming in every single national-level ministry and with partnerships through women's groups and movements.<sup>56</sup>

He hoped, by institutionalizing gender mainstreaming and working with women's groups and movements, he could successfully achieve his ten main projects. These projects were selected on the basis that they were not only most important for women, but also most imperative for true gender equal realization. These ten main projects penetrated all aspects of women in society, including, in the family, health, access to

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 27.



the labor market, human capital development, arts and culture, unification and international cooperation, and the collective consciousness of Korean society.<sup>57</sup>

For the Roh Administration, gender mainstreaming incorporated policies that were not only strictly geared towards women, but those that would change the perception of men and society at large, ultimately changing the societal relationship between men and women. According to the structure of the Plan, it can be heavily inferred that it was his goal to implement the policies, but to build an effective system to implement those goals. This was inferred through his game-plan for how he would institutionalize gender mainstreaming.

The Plan states that it would instill gender mainstreaming by actually consulting with women and having women's participation in the policymaking process. By using gender-sensitive statistics and analyzing current and future policies areas based on a gendered-analysis, he hoped to instill gender mainstreaming implicitly or explicitly through all facets of society.<sup>58</sup> One of the ways in which we would do so was to dismantle the traditional notion of family and to address the changing family structure.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Plan was stronger than the 1<sup>st</sup> in terms of gender mainstreaming because it kicked it up a notch. Roh institutionalized partnerships with and between the Ministry of Gender Equality, the Central Administrative Agencies, Municipal Governmental Agencies, women's groups and movements, and professionals to implement the 2<sup>nd</sup> Basic Plan for Women's Policies.

### Main Policies and Outcomes

The first main outcome was that Roh Moo-Hyun institutionalized gender mainstreaming for all central-level ministries. His predecessor, Kim Dae-jung implemented gender mainstreaming for policies in only six central-level ministries,

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 29.

but the 2<sup>nd</sup> Basic Plan implemented gender mainstreaming, gender-sensitive budget analysis, and gender-sensitive budgets in all policies for all central-level ministries.<sup>60</sup>

A reporter for the *Women's Newspaper*, Kwon Ji-hee praises the seven main policy outcomes of the Roh Administration, including his expansion of gender mainstreaming.<sup>61</sup> Roh Moo-hyun made an historic appointment of Kang Keum-sil as the first woman Minister of Justice. During her tenure, the Anti-Prostitution Act of 2004 was passed. Additionally, in 2006, the Roh Administration abolished the Family-Head system (the *hoju* system). This system determined and defined the husband as the legal head of a family. Uprooting this institutionalized archaic and patriarchal system was a step towards victory for women. Furthermore, his administration's public spending on childcare peaked at slightly over 1,000,000,000,000 KRW, which was historically the highest amount of public spending on childcare provisions. This is a stark contrast to the childcare funding that amounted to a fifth of that number in 2002.<sup>62</sup> However, the lower amount of funding within the women-friendly presidency of Kim Dae-jung can easily be attributed to the effects of the IMF crisis.

One outcome that is worth mentioning separately is the controversial Framework Act on Healthy Families of 2004. The name and the contents of this legislation spiraled into a debate. First and foremost, it was heavily controversial because of the adjective 'healthy' attached to the word 'family.' Many activists were concerned about this law because it effectively defined what a healthy family meant and what it was supposed to entail. A healthy family meant a husband and wife with children. This image of family reverted to the traditional Confucian image of family, a time where single

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>61</sup> Kwon Ji-hee (2007.02.23) 7대 사건으로 본 참여정부 여성정책 4년 성적표  
<http://www.womennews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=32722>

<sup>62</sup> Yonjoo Cho and Gary N. Mclean, *Korean Women in Leadership* (Cham: Springer International, 2018), 90.

moms were not an accepted social norm.<sup>63</sup> The contents itself were not safe from fire. According to a statement by the Korean Women's Movement Association, what was most concerning was found in Article 1, Section 8 of the Act.<sup>64</sup> In here, it states that all people should find that marriage and childbirth are societally important and thus, marriage and childbirth are strongly recommended. The report states that this article turns an aspect of freedom into one that is mandatory.<sup>65</sup>

Although it was understandably controversial coming from such a women-friendly president, there were those that argued that that law was not a compromise between women and the government, but a compromise Roh had to make with the changing demographics of the time.<sup>66</sup> Although still pervasive today, what was especially alarming during Roh's Administration was the faltering number of childbirths in a year. To address this issue through institutionalizing welfare policies, maternal health, paid maternity, and paternity leave, the administration ultimately enacted the law.

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<sup>63</sup> Seung-kyung Kim and Kyounghee Kim, *The Korean Woman's Movement and the State: Bargaining for Change*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 17.

<sup>64</sup> Women's Association, Korean Women's Movement Association, "건강가족법은 '병든 가족법,'" *The Korean Women's Movement Association*, April 08, 2004, <http://women21.or.kr/society/4541>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Seung-kyung Kim and Kyounghee Kim, *The Korean Woman's Movement and the State: Bargaining for Change*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 17.

Analysis: “Full-Throttle”

	Democracy (Less Focus)	Democracy (Greater Focus)
Development (Less Focus)		
Development (Greater Focus)		X

Table 4. Roh Moo-hyun (2003-2007) “Full Throttle”

Despite the hiccup with the Framework Act on Healthy Families (2004), the overall analysis of and response towards Roh Moo-hyun’s women’s policies by women’s group leaders and participants were overwhelmingly positive. Additionally, as seen, the hiccup can neither be directly attributed to him due to the changing demographics, nor outweigh the benefits presented by Roh. Not only was his intention for the realization of a gender equal society acknowledged, but he was able to legal institutionalize and financially supports his policies. Within the context of women’s policies, the Roh Administration indeed fulfills his promise of a ‘participatory government.’ What separated him from Kim Young-sam, Kim Dae-jung, Lee Myung-bak, and Park Geun-hye was his game plan to take women’s policies beyond state feminism. No other administration analyzed within this research deployed a strategy like his where it was simultaneously top-down and bottom-up.

Although hypothesized that Roh Moo-hyun’s policies would mainly fall under the category of democracy, through social welfare or substantive representation, it was clear that his policies addressed women under the lights of both democracy and development. With the help of a clear outline provided by Kim Dae-jung, he was able to deepen the fight for women through both democracy and development. This serves

as the main reason why, when directly compared with the other three administrations, the Roh Administration is placed in the quadrant of: (i) greater focus on democracy and (ii) greater focus on development. Overall, due to the why's, how's, and what's of his administration, it was clear that not only was he a president for women, but with women.

*Lee Myung-bak (2008-2012): "Recall"*

### Background

The fight for gender equality and justice for women came to a halt and was reversed with the inauguration of Lee Myung-bak in 2008. "The progressive women's policy ministry created in 2001 in order to end discrimination and end gender equality became a name-only government ministry without significant administrative power."<sup>67</sup> Women's movements even before Lee Myung-bak's inauguration already fraught with distraught. First, there were major administrative changes. Administrative changes also mean changes in the level of authority and accessibility to financial support. Originally, the Lee Administration tried to demolish the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in its entirety. However, when we received severe backlash, he kept the name and name only – there were detrimental administrative and structural changes. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family was broken into the Ministry of Women, and the 'Family' was allocated to the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Lee also slashed the budget towards women's policies, which includes childcare and support, to a third of what it was under the Roh Administration. This unfortunately and effectively reduced the physical size and the political power of this Ministry.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Framework Plan for Women's Policies (2008-2012) was published on both a new administrative background but a new political background. The new motto of a 'gender equal, mature society' was adopted. The first few pages of this Plan set the

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 14.

foundation on which the policies would be erected. The policies and the Ministry were mainly constrained within the boundaries of conservative ideology and politics. Because conservative ideology in Korea firmly rests on economic growth and development, paying homage back to the economic golden days of Park Chung-hee, the women's policies were mainly structured in 'pragmatic' ways to aid the overall economic and demographic situation of Korea. Mainly, it was re-structured to combat Korea's changing demography and weakening economic growth.

The Ministry of Statistics' long-term outlook for Korea's labor force population paints an aging society with a decline in the birthrate. By 2050 the outlook is that the overall labor force population is a third of what it was at 2000 with the age group from 25 to 59 and 50 to 64 approximately quadrupling the labor force population of the age group of 15 to 24.<sup>68</sup> Not only are there serious concerns for the future of the Korean labor force population but there are also discrepancies between the average male and women workers in part-time and full-time positions. The numbers for full-time working women are higher within the age group of 20 to 24, which is commonly the time frame for enabled Korean men to enlist and serve in the Korean military for two years. The number of men in full-time and part-time are marginally higher than women starting at 25 years of age and significantly higher, especially in terms for full-time work, than women onward.<sup>69</sup>

The inequality exists in the labor market, as well as, the individual household. When surveyed for a married couple living with either the man and woman's parents and asked about the division of labor within the household, the results were as follows. According to those surveyed in 2008, 10.3% of total number of couples were living with parents and 11.7% of those couples consisted of both the men and women as participants of the labor market. In the same survey, when asked about their views on household labor division, 22.8% of those living with parents agreed that the division

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<sup>68</sup> Ministry of Gender Equality, *3<sup>rd</sup> Plan for Women's Policies (2008-2012)*, 15.

<sup>69</sup> Ministry of Gender Equality, Ministry of Statistics. "Survey on Labor Force Population by Age and Work Type in 2008) in the *3<sup>rd</sup> Plan for Women's Policies (2008-2012)*, 16.

of household labor should be equal and 22.1% of those living with parents while both working agreed that it should be equal. However, in reality, 9% of those women living with parents, her own or her husband's, experienced an equal division of household labor, while 12% of the couples living with parents while both working agreed that the division was equal.<sup>70</sup>

The Lee Myung-bak administration sought to meet the demands of the 'new' economic environment. He believed it was necessary to create jobs for women that were pertinent to 21<sup>st</sup>-century economic growth sectors of Korea, namely, within the technology-related sectors. Additionally, he saw an increased demand for women's economic activities because of the expenses of child-rearing and raising.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Basic Plan for Women's Policies (2008-2012)

Based on the contextual background on which the 3<sup>rd</sup> Basic Plan for Women's Policy was painted, the Lee Administration believed it to be important to address the aging society and the M-shaped curve by implementing measures to integrate women into the workforce without the societal or financial burden of child-rearing or living with parents at home. Korea at that time in 2007 experienced the sharpest dip in the M-curve at age 30 to 34 when compared with women's employment and economic activities with OECD and G7 countries.<sup>71</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> Plan sets out three focus points for women policies under the Lee Administration. First, is to focus on job security and job creation for women. Second, he addresses policies that include welfare provisions for women facing poverty, North Korea women defectors, and protecting women, children, and those facing disabilities from sex offenders. The third point sets to strengthen the foundation for gender equality in Korea. Despite his tripartite focus, the Ministry of Gender Equality under his vision states two overarching goals for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Basic Plan: (i) focus on women's job security and to (ii) create a foundation of

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>71</sup> Ministry of Gender Equality, *3<sup>rd</sup> Plan for Women's Policies (2008-2012) Edited*, 15.

women's policies that will be appropriate to contribute to Korea's sustainable growth.<sup>72</sup>

When comparing the overarching policies stated above with the actual funding allocation of the Lee Myung-bak Administration for women's policies in 2011, his focus is narrow and evident. 2,644,709,000,000 KRW was allocated solely to job creation for women, job centers for woman finding work, and childcare services for working women. This is in stark contrast to the mere 229,003,000,000 KRW allocated to include welfare provisions and protection service systems for women and children against sex offenders. In comparative terms, the funding for policies for protecting women's and interests were only 8% of his policies regarding the utilization of the women's labor force. For his policy of 'strengthening' gender equality in Korea, only 23,225,000,000 KRW was allocated. Just to put it into perspective, the spot exchange rate for the USD to the KRW for January 2011 was 1,125, making his biggest allocation worth approximately 2.35 billion USD and his smallest 2 million USD. The budget provision increased by 676,761,000,000 KRW with all of the increase going to his main policy of the integration of Korean women into the labor market.<sup>73</sup>

The current Ministry of Gender Equality and Family has undergone several political name changes. The Lee Administration undid Roh Moo-hyun's Ministry of Gender Equality and Family and gave back the 'Family' to the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Furthermore, what is important to note for the funding allocation regarding women's policies is that the funding listed above is directed to different ministries. Although this 3<sup>rd</sup> Basic Plan was written by the Ministry of Gender Equality, when only looking at the allocations, the Ministry of Gender Equality received the third-largest budget allocation. The Ministry of Health and Welfare received the largest sum or two-thirds of the entire budget stated above. If the Ministry was still the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, it would have received an overwhelming

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<sup>72</sup> Ministry of Gender Equality, *3<sup>rd</sup> Plan for Women's Policies (2008-2012)*, 12.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.



majority of the budget for women's policies. The rest of the budget was allocated to 15 other South Korean governmental ministries, including the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. The 5 Ministries that did not receive any funding for the implementation of women's policies were: (i) Economy and Finance, (ii) Unification, (iii) Economy and Knowledge, (iv) Land, Transport, and Maritime Affairs, and (v) Statistics.<sup>74</sup>

There are two main findings that come with analyzing his funding. The first is his clear focus. Lee, by conceding to keeping the Ministry of Gender Equality as a ministry focused solely on the developmental aspects. His funding is a direct reflection of his strategy. For the Lee Administration, the strategy started mainly in the workplace. From a more democratic and equal role attribution to men and women in the workplace, he sought to empower women. Then through this, he believed a gender equal society could be achieved.<sup>75</sup> The strategy of the Lee Administration is one of the main reasons why 'family' and other 'private sphere' aspects regarding women were severely left out in the implementation of his policies.

Second, we can see that Lee Myung-bak's policies can be categorized as mostly plain vanilla. His administration did little to almost nothing to add any new or big changes. What he did was kept some of the policies created by Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun into place. The policies regarding the protection of women's rights and interests included the policies that were already introduced before.<sup>76</sup> Even his focus on the developmental aspects were not much different or greater than what they did. The development focused funding was mainly channeled towards the projects listed out below.

Lee Myung-bak set to institutionalize the utilization of the women's labor force through increasing women's career development program centers, such as Women

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 21-23.

Into Science and Engineering (WISE) and gave financial support for vocational training programs.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, he sought to puff out the M-curve by increasing job support for career-interrupted women, specifically for those in the R&D related fields. He also implemented quota representations for women in certain sectors such as, farming, food production, government administrative divisions, professorships in public and private universities, higher positions in the Korean military, and higher levels of civil servants. His policies supported women entrepreneurs and inventors, and women owning 1-person businesses. He also focused on preventing discrimination for female workers, specifically for part-time workers and those with disabilities. Moreover, the Lee Administration implemented policies to ease the difficulties with regards to child-rearing in the form of social and financial assistance. He increased the number of daycares, babysitters, maternal and paternal leave, and provided for limited childcare expenses. However, these policies only marginally improved or added on to the existing infrastructure and not original.

The ‘greatest’ change pushed for by his administration was the enactment of the Gender Impact Assessment (2011). He created the Committee of Gender Impact Assessment and added the number of institutions that would incorporate gender impact assessments into their policymaking. He also incorporated gender-sensitive budgeting for major national financial projects and institutions for the planning of comprehensive, long-term women’s policies.<sup>78</sup> His administration stated that they would high and focus on necessary areas in need of improvement and continuation based on the National Gender Equality Index. Although this, indeed, was a change, it was only an official title given to something that was already done under Roh’s Administration.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 19-21.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

### Public Discourse and the Response from Civil Society

The self-reported outcomes of his administration were far more positive than negative, but was drastically different than the picture painted by reality. Nine representatives of various Women's Group and Movements came together for a press conference on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009 to discuss President Lee's policies on women a year into his tenure. They stated that his policies for women were no more than generic. Specifically, they stated that gender equality policies were missing, there was a lack of public-private partnerships with regards to women's rights and interests, family and welfare policies were retreating, and that at most, the policies were only focused on job creation for women.<sup>79</sup>

*Womenlink*, Department of Media Movement, in June 2009 wrote a news article regarding Lee's women's policies. It characterized the Lee Administration as one that cares neither about women's rights nor women's policies. This department stated that, "to claim the level of his policies as mediocre is even embarrassing."<sup>80</sup> It further states that because Lee Myung-bak is only one year into his tenure, there is room for change and gave some policy recommendations. However, the manager of this department, Kang Hyun-hee, ends with her weary stance of the possibility for these changes and ultimately questions whether or not the Lee Administration even cares about women's rights and policies.

Three years later, it seems as if neither the Lee Administration nor the critiques surrounding his women's policies have changed their stance. According to a news article by *Welfare Association Newspaper*, titled, "Three Years into the Lee Administration: Women Can't Be Found," states that the effort that has gone into

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<sup>79</sup> Choi Won-hyoung (최원형), "1 Year into Lee Myung-bak's Administration "Women's Policies Missing in Action" (이명박정부 1년 '여성정책 실종'), *The Hankyoreh*, Feb. 29, 2009 <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/women/340842.html>

<sup>80</sup> Kang Hyun-hee (강현희), "여성인권도 여성정책도 관심없는 정부," *MediaUs*, June 6, 2009, <http://www.mediaus.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=6876>

gender equality in Korea for the past 30 years has been undone and was for nothing.<sup>81</sup> Rather than separating women and men for the pursuit of gender equality, the meaning of women, since the Lee Administration, has only meant family. The main critique was that although Lee Myung-bak stated that he would strengthen the foundation for gender equality in Korea on the level of other advanced economies, according to his third policy, there has been no progress, only retreat and recall.

Analysis

	Democracy (Less Focus)	Democracy (Greater Focus)
Development (Less Focus)	X	
Development (Greater Focus)		

Table 5. Lee Myung-bak (2008-2012) "Recall"

As hypothesized, the Lee Administration fell in-line with the conservative party ideology. He mainly focused on women’s policies pertaining to the national economic growth agenda through their integration into the labor market and greater infrastructure to sustain women's livelihoods to fill the gaps of Korea’s changing demographic of an aging society with a consistently alarming birth rate. Additionally, it was found that he had severely limited interest in the overall growth of gender equality and closing the societal disparities between men and women.

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<sup>81</sup> Park Young-shin (박영신), “이명박 정부 3년... ‘여성이 안 보인다,’” *Bokji News*, February 2, 2011, <http://www.bokjinews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=12866>

Although the respective departments in charge of specific women's policies published their own reports of the outcomes they achieved, it is difficult to tell whether it was genuinely because of Lee Myung-bak's policies or if they were an extension of the institutionalized measures placed by his predecessors. This outcome is based on two factors observed in his 3<sup>rd</sup> Framework Plan. The first is that there were drastic cuts in funding from the previous administration and an uneven distribution of that slashed funding. The second factor was that there was nothing drastically innovative or different from the previous administration of Roh Moo-hyun. Whatever the official outcomes and reports may be, his push for an improvement on women's policies and gender equality in Korea was clearly missing. Lee Myung-bak focused only on women's issues pertinent to overall national economic growth and the changing demographic situation of Korea, but this too, was no different than that of his predecessors.

Although he did enact the Gender Assessment Impact (2011) the effects of it are unclear. This could stem from the limited number of institutions that incorporated this analytical framework. This was due to the fact that this framework was simply created, but not mandated. Based on this limited intention, the structural administrative changes, his specific policy focus, and the limited budgeting, it can be concluded that for him, women's policies were a means to an end, not the end, in itself. Specifically, women's policies were a means, to the end of national growth. If President Lee adopted women's policies as an end, in itself, and for gender equality in Korea, the narrative written by civil society and women's movements would have drastically changed, along with the findings of this research. Although given sufficient time and lists of policy recommendations, within his tenure of 5 years, it was unfortunately clear that President Lee Myung-bak did not try to improve the overall quality of women's lives in Korea. Even after the first year, the third year and the fifth year, women were, indeed, not found in his women's policies.

*Park Geun-hye (2013-2017): “U-Turn”*

Background

In February 2013, former President Park Geun-hye was inaugurated as the 18<sup>th</sup> Korean President, but more importantly, the first-ever woman Korean president. One of the platforms her campaign ran on concerned women’s issues and her promise to make Korea a better, safer place for women. She claimed ‘sexual and domestic violence’ as one of the four social sins she hoped to eradicate as the next president. Her platform on women’s policies was met with hope, excitement, and weariness for a few reasons. For one, she is the daughter of Park Chung-hee, a military dictator that was socially oppressive. Second, her immediate predecessor, Lee Myung-bak, was far less concerned with women’s issues and was also from the conservative party. However, because she is a woman and her campaign made certain promises with advancing women’s rights and safety, the overall mixed reaction was expected.

The Korean Women’s Development Institute published a report in 2013 on a survey titled, “The Era of a Women President: What do the People Want?” It surveyed 1,203 men and women from all major cities excluding that of Jeju Island. Of those surveyed, 48.3% picked “a safe society, away from sexual violence” as the most important policy that they want to be addressed by President Park and her administration. This was 9.2% greater than the second policy chosen, which was “a safe society for raising children.” The third policy was to increase welfare and job availabilities.<sup>82</sup> For the people surveyed at this time, a majority of them seemed to be more concerned with physical and emotional safety rather than fiscal safety. When breaking down the report’s responses between men and women, men were far less concerned with policies on integrating women into the labor market and those that would push for gender equality. Rather, they were more approving of policies that supported a healthy family, including maternal health and the birth of a child, and support for

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<sup>82</sup> KWDI, 여성 대통령 시대, 국민들이 바라는 여성정책은? *KWDI*, April 7, 2013. <https://www.kwdi.re.kr/plaza/bodoView.do?p=19&idx=102565>

childcare and education.<sup>83</sup> From this, it can be inferred that the perspectives between men and women on women's policies are quite different. Whereas women are more invested in policies that address them as 'women,' men were more interested in policies that addressed 'the family.' Finally, when asked about the relevance of women's policies in general, only 57.6% of the 605 men agreed that women's policies were a necessary policy area. Furthermore, 22.3% of 605 men asked stated that women's policies were not an important policy area that needs to be addressed.<sup>84</sup>

The Ministry of Gender Equality officially became re-united with its division and administrative jurisdiction of 'the family,' under Park Geun-hye. In the 4<sup>th</sup> Framework Plan for Women's Policies, Park Geun-hye stated the three fundamental objectives for her women's policies as: (i) gender equality and equal participation in society, (ii) provision social safety nets, and (iii) work-life balance management.

#### Lee Myung-bak vs. Park Geun-hye

A year into her tenure, the Park Geun-hye Administration released a progress report in 2014 for her implementation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Framework Plan for Women's Policies. Even after just a year into office, significant improvements were made since Lee Myung-bak. For example, the number of employed women increased by 219,000 to 9,884,000 from 2013 to 2014 with the rate of hiring women also increasing. Under Park, not only did the number of 'family-friendly'<sup>85</sup> businesses increase, but more families begin to use maternal and paternal leave. Additionally, the rate of uninvestigated or underreported sexual violence cases decreased significantly from 15.6% in 2011 to 5.0% in 2014. The more drastic decrease was the domestic violence recidivism rate that went from 32.9% in 2011 to 11.1% by 2014.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>85</sup> Here, the term 'family-friendly' business is used by the government to denote businesses that had policies in place to mostly women, but also men, to balance the work-family life. One measure could include paid maternity leave or non-discriminatory policies used during the hiring process.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Basic Plan for Women's Policies (2013-2017)

From the pursued policies and the outcomes based on those policies, one of her main focal points was providing support to help the work-life balance for men and women. She increased public spending on the creation of public childcare and daycare centers and also extended support for children up to 2 years old. Before, the support was only available for parents whose children were 12 months or younger. Additionally, Park extended both paid maternal and paternal leave.<sup>86</sup> Originally, under Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, the concept of family was mostly based on a traditional characterization of the family which included a husband, wife, and child. Park institutionalized measures to provide welfare for single-parent households and endorsed a law that would mandate child support from biological parents that may be living separately or have gone through divorce.<sup>87</sup>

Another area of concern for Park was eliminating discrimination towards women and protecting women from perpetrators. She amended the term 'sexual discrimination' to not purely discrimination based on sex in the hiring process and employment, but to include the intent of discrimination, as well.<sup>88</sup> Park also includes sexual and domestic violence in mandatory education for elementary, middle, and high school students. Furthermore, she enacted a new law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims which mandated police to respond to all calls of domestic violence and slapped a fee on possible aggressors that did not want to take part in the investigation.

Additionally, Park focused far more on creating a collective societal consciousness around gender equality than her predecessor did.<sup>89</sup> Increasing education was one of the more policies, but she also pushed for gender equality and women-friendly programs within media, art, and culture. She also revised the Gender Impact Analysis

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<sup>86</sup> Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, *4<sup>th</sup> Plan for Women's Policies (2013-2017)*, 7.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.



and Assessment Act to include public announcements for specific analysis results. Of the many outcomes, what was found the most interesting was her change from the Framework on Women’s Development to the Framework on Gender Equality.<sup>90</sup> This shifted the government’s focus from solely women’s development to gender equality in general. The shift to gender equality is more important because women’s policies are implemented for ultimate gender equality, but instating the entire framework as gender equality, inherently includes women’s policies and doesn’t posit women as ‘women’ but as equal members of society.

Analysis

	Democracy (Less Focus)	Democracy (Greater Focus)
Development (Less Focus)		
Development (Greater Focus)		X

Table 6. Park Geun-hye (2013-2017) “U-turn”

Originally, it was hypothesized that President Park Geun-hye’s policies on women would fall within the lines of her conservative party. The impact of her being a woman on women’s policies was an element of surprise. Although she was from the conservative party and the hopes and demands from her as the daughter of Park Chung-hee were high, it is analyzed that she fought for women’s equality with great effort pushing the boundaries of the lines in which she was constrained. She was a caged bird fighting to expand the size of the cage. The change from viewing women as a means to an end for national economic growth and development to viewing

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 16.

gender equality as the end, itself, was one of the factors that significantly differentiated her from her conservative predecessor. Additionally, what made her stand out from her liberal predecessors was that she sought to expand the notion of family from the Confucian-type, to other forms of family.

The article “President Park Guen-Hye of South Korea: A Woman President without Women” by Young-im Lee and Farida Jalazai argues that although Park did expand on Kim and Roh’s efforts for gender equality while undoing many of Lee’s falters, when it comes to substantive representation, Park’s actions were inadequate because of the lack of women representation in different levels of government.<sup>91</sup> However, to a degree, this thesis argues against Young-im Lee and Farida Jalazai’s claims. It agrees that Park was not comprehensive in her pursuance of women’s policies and substantive representation, but disagrees with the claim that direct appointments of women policymaking and leadership positions is a key measurement of substantive representation. Although representation is imperative in policymaking positions and all levels of society and business, the attitude and the intention, themselves, have reverberating impacts that can be felt throughout. It is not guaranteed that by solely appointing women into these positions, more policies that directly affect women will come about. Furthermore, substantive representation is not only about physical representation, but reacting to the voices of those being represented. With this in mind and the findings concluded above, Park’s actions should be given more credit.

To solely judge her entire administration and women’s policies on just one factor seems to be limited. Once again to state, before she was the first woman president of Korea, she was the daughter of Park Chung-hee. To her supporters, they saw economic growth and the golden days of Korean development. Considering this perspective, the positive impact she has had on women and gender equality may not be enough to critiques, but the intention for being a president for women was evident.

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<sup>91</sup> Young-im Lee and Farida Jalazai, “President Park Geun-hye of South Korea: A Woman President without Women?” *Politics & Gender* 13, no. 4 (2017): 598.

For these reasons, her actions and policies are placed on a border. Although she was more development focused as expected, her democracy focus cannot be ignored. Through her actions, we can see that there is a convergence between democracy and development. This convergence is different than that of Roh's because Roh was a president for women and all aspects pertaining to women, that convergence was not surprising. The convergence from a president of the conservative party is far more telling for the future of gender equality in Korea.

## VI. Conclusion

### Limitations

One of the major limitations of this study is that it does not include current policies and legislations promoted and enacted by the current administration of Moon Jae-in. Looking into the current administration's policies toward women and gender equality might have been helpful see the possibility of an on-going trend pursued by his progressive predecessors. Furthermore, if there were critical junctures or departures from the usual progressive party lines to a more radical approach towards women's policies, then it would have been insightful to see the impact it has had on the current gender equality trends along with prospects for the future. However, for the logistical reason that the administration is still halfway in tenure and for the sake of the comparative aspect of pitting and analyzing the trends of women's policies of two liberal and two conservative administrations, the current Administration has not been included.

Kim Dae-jung faced difficulties and limitations during the IMF, limiting the potential positive impact on gender equality in Korea. Similarly, it would have been interesting to observe the possibly adverse impacts of Covid-19 on Korean women's lives. Many women in countries all over the world have experienced an increase of domestic and sexual violence and many families experienced the financial burdens of being laid-off or not having health care during this crisis. To see how Covid-19 has impacted women and the move towards gender equality in Korea would have

been interesting, but due to the scope of this thesis, that impact analysis was not included.

The third major limitation of this research is that it fails to include the grassroots women’s movements in Korea. Pursuance of women’s policies and gender equality did not appear from thin air, but from the push of a myriad of women’s groups throughout the past decades of Korea. One could adequately argue that movements are a form of institutions, themselves, but the scope of this thesis only focuses on the policies that were pursued by governments, themselves, or with partnerships with major women’s groups and movements. This was excluded to help keep the focus on the task of analyzing these issues within the boundaries of democracy and development through state-led policies.

### Analysis Wrap-up

	Democracy (Less Focus)	Democracy (Greater Focus)
Development (Less Focus)	Lee Myung-bak (conservative)	Kim Dae-jung (liberal)
Development (Greater Focus)	Park Geun-hye (conservative)	Roh Moo-hyun (liberal)

Table 7. Analysis of women’s policies pursued by administration within the spectrum of democracy and development

As hypothesized in this research and previous literature, the two liberal administrations of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun were indeed women-friendly. What was surprising was that the two liberal administrations did not limit themselves to the traditional areas of democracy, such as representation and welfare. The development focus was also paved by Kim Dae-jung side-by-side with the democratic

elements of women's policies. This focus for the development of women's livelihood was actively sought out and pursued by Roh Moo-hyun. To an extent, for these two presidents, gender equality was comprehensively pursued penetrating all levels and aspects of women's lives in society by the very definition of 'gender equality.' However, the findings differentiate the two liberal presidents for a few reasons.

The main reason for this differentiation is provided by the timing and the context. Kim Dae-jung's push for gender equality and women's policies came immediately after the concept was introduced by Kim Young-sam. There was no path and very limited infrastructure, only women's movements and associations to help him ignite and trailblaze a new path for women. Theoretically, gender was visioned as a nexus between democracy and development under Kim Dae-jung, but could not be actively manifested as desired. Roh Moo-hyun was able to push these visions into full throttle during his tenure. Not only was the blueprint already drawn out by Kim Dae-jung, but he wasn't handcuffed by the fiscal restrictions brought on by the Asian Financial Crisis. Regardless, in theory or in reality, it was clear that through the policies and actions taken by both the liberal presidents, they acknowledged the fact that women do not face issues only in certain aspects of life, but face institutionalized discrimination in *all* areas of life. Alongside women's movements and associations, they fought to dismantle these barriers for democracy and development.

The findings based on the analysis of the two conservative administrations was as hypothesized, but more complicated. Although Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye implemented women's policies within their traditional party lines, they both took extreme positions within the scope of their party lines. Lee Myung-bak was met with fierce backlash from various Korean women's movements and associations due to the economic-only policies he pursued while fundamentally ignoring the other areas of the women's agenda. Even with his implementation of economic-only policies, the reach of his policies was not evenly distributed and largely focused on sectors such as technology, science, engineering and RnD. Park Geun-hye another conservative president took the other extreme position within her party lines. She did not go outside

of the usual party lines pushing for national economic and growth. However, much more than her predecessor did she actively pursue women's policies that dealt with aspects of women's lives beyond their livelihood and their potential for productivity and national growth.

For Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, there is no doubt that women's policies were an end, in-itself. They were not a means, because justice of women in all areas of society and the push for gender equality was what drove those two administrations. For Lee Myung-bak, as stated before, implementing women's policies were merely a means to an end. The means were using, developing, and integrating women's human capital into the overall labor market, for the 'end' of increasing productivity, and supporting the overall national economic growth. The case with Park Geun-hye is not as clear-cut as her predecessors. When analyzing her policies within the pursuit of her party lines, it may seem as if women and women's policies were used as means. However, when we take her policies outside of the context of her party line and realize the implication that the name change from the Framework on Women's Development to the Framework on Gender Equality along with her expansion of 'family,' it is clear that there was some intention for implementing women's policies as an end for gender equality and the betterment of the quality of women's lives.

### Gender Equality in Korea

Even after the conclusion of this research, one question remains. What has 'gender equality' and 'women' meant for all four administrations and Korean society at large? Why is the Ministry of Gender Equality titled 'gender equality' in English, but 'women' in Korean? Additionally, what is the institutional implication for constantly attaching and detaching the word 'family' to the ministry name symbolize?

This leads to the question: what is the societal meaning for women in Korea? Is 'woman' always, inherently tied to another person? Does she always have to be defined or constrained as a mother, wife, or daughter? Can she ever be herself or an equal? The name of the ministry has underlying implications. The name of the

ministry can alter the definition of women in society. When the term ‘family’ is attached to the Ministry, it may receive additional public funding, but does that help or hinder true gender equality in Korea? It’s clearly not the case that there is no word for ‘gender equality’ in Korean. The terms ‘sex, woman, gender, gender mainstreaming’ are all incorporated within this Basic Framework for Women’s Policies, but why is the actual ministry given two different names in two different languages? In English, the Ministry is titled as the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, but in Korean, it is the Ministry of Women and Family. Language and meaning are both forms of social institutions with real social implications.

Although there are still a number of daunting challenges to overcome, the findings of this research show signs of hope. The meaning of women and gender has come along way since the introduction of gender mainstreaming by Kim Young-sam. The framework was laid out by Kim Dae-jung and propelled at full-speed by Roh Moo-hyun. Although many of the policies and outcomes were retracted and hopelessly dismantled by Lee Myung-bak, Park Guen-hye’s stance of convergence showed signs of hope. Through her we saw that gender does not necessarily have to be a political issue oscillating between democracy and development. Through her we saw that even the conservative party of Korea can realize that women and the issue of gender can also be depoliticized within the Korean context. Korea, with its unique blend of democracy with elements left behind by the developmental state legacy, can choose to be a breeding ground for hope of gender equality. Women cannot be left out or ignored in any democracies, and if the state chooses to make gender equality its national and state-led priority, it can easily do so. Although the changes may take a while to manifest in form of gender equality, the hope of gender existing as the nexus between democracy and development faintly shines as light at the end of the tunnel.

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## 초록

대한민국 여성발전기본법이 1996년에 제정되면서 정치, 경제, 사회, 문화 등의 분야에서 여성정책을 국가목표로 공식 공포되었다. 민주주의 사회와 국가 성장 궤도를 더 나아가기를 바라는 사회에서는 여성의 개발이 필요하다는 것이 명백해졌다. 이 연구는 여성정책이 한국의 진보와 보수 정당들 사이에서 그리고 한국의 민주적 전환 이후 민주주의와 발전 사이에서 어떻게 변화되었는지에 중점을 두었다. 김대중과 노무현의 두 진보주의 정부와 이명박과 박근혜의 두 보수주의 정부를 질적으로 비교 분석을 한다.

처음에는 진보 정권이 실질적인 대의, 복지와 같은 민주적 측면에 더 초점을 맞추는 반면, 보수 증권은 여성의 생계와 전반적인 국가 성장을 촉진하는 것을 포함한 발전적 측면에 초점을 맞출 것이라는 가설이 제기되었다. 그러나, 여성과 여성 정책은 정치적 당파 주의와 전통적인 정당 가치에 기반을 둔 두 개의 정책 진영으로 쉽게 나눌 수 없는 것으로 밝혀졌다. 게다가, 여성과 여성의 정책은 민주주의와 개발의 범주에 넣을 수 없는 것으로 밝혀졌다. 오히려, 여성과 여성 정책이 융합되어 민주주의와 개발의 연결고리를 형성하면서, 한국의 양성평등의 미래에 대한 희망을 불러일으킨 것으로 나타났다.