

Environmental Politics in Postwar Japan

MORI Michiya

Over the past few decades a considerable number of studies in social science have been made on environmental issues. On political science in Japan, most of all attention has been given to the politics on the environment at the local level. However, this paper aims at revealing political process over the environment at the central government in postwar Japan.

Two features are roughly described when this paper is compared with the trend of the preceding researches. Firstly, this paper is concerned with the omission of few studies on environmental politics. They overlooked the very structure of the politics in broader viewpoint since they have been based on Japanese Style Pluralism, which views the interests of actors as relatively static. Secondly, with reference to the first point, it was argued that the environmental politics should be analyzed in terms of New Institutionalism, that is, under the particular structure, what kind of policy the government could adopt and what extent of autonomy they could have. When this paper focuses on the government, it refers to the theory of 'Arenas of Power' by Theodore J. Lowi.

In this regard, the three case studies of political processes from 1955 to 1993 are examined; the process from the establishment of Basic Law for Environmental Pollution Control in 1967 to Environmental Basic Law in 1993 with respect to the institutional arrangements of Environmental Agency in Japanese Politics; the process that the government create a perception on pollution issues during 1973 to 1987, and; the process of the establishment of Japanese Pollution-Related Health Damage Compensation Law in 1973 and its revision in 1987.

As a result, this paper contributes to the debate on environmental politics by presenting a new explanation about it, and the development of the theory on the political process.