The idea of global citizenship in contemporary South Korean public discourse has revolved mainly around a national endeavor to boost the county’s stature and competitiveness amid economic globalization. Based on a review of two decades of published media references to segye shimin (‘global citizen’ in the Korean language), this article shows that the specific usages of segye shimin – mainly by elites from government, academia, and journalism – underscore how the ‘developmental citizenship’ that marked South Korea’s past authoritarian military regimes has carried on since the transition to civilian-led democracy. In contrast with the burgeoning academic discourse on cosmopolitanism that focuses heavily on moral responsibilities to humanity and the planet, South Korea’s discourse of global citizenship has been closely aligned with neoliberalism and filled with exhortations to the domestic population to overcome numerous perceived liabilities seen as impeding the country’s advancement. While global citizenship discourse in South Korea has emphasized topdown national strategic imperatives, a bottom-up approach to cosmopolitanism is also emerging as the country gains confidence and the notion of segye shimin gradually gains traction across the wider society.