

**Book Review: Chang Kyung-Sup (2022) *The Logic of Compressed Modernity*. Polity Press.**

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Nowadays, East Asia serves as a pivot of global economic growth, and modernity in East Asia is a popular topic within academia. Chang Kyung-Sup's new book, *The Logic of Compressed Modernity*, provides a sociological explanation for modernity in South Korea. From a sociological perspective, the concept of "modernity" typically refers to a condition of social existence that is significantly distinct from all previous human experiences. However, Chang claims that modernity in East Asia is a form of compressed modernity, achieved in a relatively short time and intertwined with traditional thoughts. Chang argues that modernity in South Korea is compressed in both time and space dimensions. As depicted on the book's cover, an old man resides in a bungalow while many high-rise mansions stand nearby, forming its background. This book aims to convey that compressed modernity not only led to high levels of economic growth in South Korea but also resulted in a series of social challenges such as population aging, overloaded families, and unfair economic distribution.

Chang's book comprises three parts. Part I consists of three chapters elucidating the theoretical aims of this book. Therefore, Part I extensively explains the features of compressed modernity. Chang devises a theoretical model to elucidate the five constitutive dimensions of South Korea's compressed modernity. In this model, the two axes of time/space and condensation/compression interactively contribute to the five dimensions. Part II constitutes an empirical research section, encompassing six chapters. In Part II, Chang delves into compressed modernity within South Korea's society, citizenship, cultures, social productivity and re-productivity, family, and demographics. Part III encompasses one chapter, delineating the implications of the theoretical and empirical research. In Part III, Chang forecasts the development of South Korea's compressed modernity in the future. Additionally, he contends that compressed modernity has become a common challenge for nearly all East Asian economies.

As an early career researcher with research interests in international relations in the Asia-Pacific region, I find this book impressive because it provides a robust explanation of how asymmetrical

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international relations, encompassing both hard and soft power, influence the modernity of East Asian countries. The most notable aspect of Chang's book is the discussion of external ideology's impact on South Korea's modernity. He particularly focuses on Confucianism from China, developmentalism from Japan, and neoliberalism from the US. China, Japan and the US not only share strong historical ties with South Korea but also wield significant influence in an asymmetrical international structure. Confucianism originally from China represents the traditional values of Korean society and was predominant before the modernization of the Korean Peninsula. Even today, the filial duty ingrained in Confucianism continues to influence the daily lives of South Koreans. Developmentalism was introduced by Japanese colonizers, emphasizing the role of the state in modernization. Developmentalism has shaped the South Korean government's long-term developmental policy preferences, with the government actively guiding economic development since the 1960s. Neoliberalism contributes to globalization in South Korean society. The globalization of South Korean society commenced in the early 1990s, marked by transnational marriages between Korean men and foreign women from other East Asian economies. Neoliberalism was imported from the US following World War II. After the Asian financial crisis between 1997 and 1998, the South Korean government enacted a series of neoliberal economic policies in line with IMF requirements. Economic openness led to the rise of multiculturalism, hastening the pace of globalization in South Korean society. Chang contends that Confucianism, developmentalism, and neoliberalism coexist to shape compressed modernity in different perspectives, underscoring why he posits that South Korean society resembles a multiplex theater.

From an international relations perspective, this argument on internal compressed modernity also holds merit. The compressed modernity influenced by external factors can be explained through international norm theory, as proposed by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (1998). The life-cycle of international norms comprises three stages: formation, diffusion, and localization. China, Japan, and the US serve as norm entrepreneurs in the formation and diffusion stage, shaping and transforming the norms of Confucianism, developmentalism, and neoliberalism in South Korea. South Korea, in turn, assumes the role of a norm embracer, localizing transnational norms. Hence, compressed modernity in South Korea can be partially understood as the localization and reformulation of international norms. From an international relations perspective, South Korea has long been a weaker player in an asymmetrical regional power structure, leading it to reflexively accept external norms.

Overall, Chang's book presents an excellent model of decolonized area studies. It provides a coherent theoretical framework for understanding the logic of compressed modernity in South Korea and endeavors to examine the model through comprehensive empirical research. For instance, Chapter 9 analyses the demographic configuration of compressed modernity from both time and space dimension, illustrating how compressed industrialization policies led to demographic transition in South Korea. In my view, the book's limitation is its lack of discussion on how South Korea's compressed modernity influences the East Asian region. In fact, South Korea not only embraces norms but also serves as a norm entrepreneur. The rapid economic growth in the late 20th century, known as the "miracle on the Han River," has provided a model for other East Asian economies such as the People's Republic of China. In the 21st century, the export of

South Korean culture has sparked a Korean Wave in East Asia. Many individuals in other East Asian economies are enamored with imitating the lifestyles depicted in Korean TV dramas. The Korean Wave showcases the innovative aspect of South Korea's compressed modernity. As Chang asserts, nearly all East Asian industries are undergoing compressed modernity (2022). Therefore, I am keen to explore how they mutually influence one another.

In summary, this book encompasses factors contributing to compressed modernity at individual, state, and international levels, offering detailed explanations for why modernity in East Asia differs from that of Western countries. Hence, this book is particularly suitable for readers with a basic understanding of sociological concepts, as well as the national and transnational history of the Asia-Pacific region.

## References

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