

Economic Development

The Case of South Korea

STANFORD PROGRAM ON INTERNATIONAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATION (SPICE)

158 PAGES WITH CD, 2015

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Reviewed by Joel R. Campbell

South Korea is a country that the world should know better. It is the third-largest economy of East Asia and the thirteenth-largest in the world. It is one of the Asian “miracle” economies that rose from poverty and the ashes of war to become an example of state-led, export-oriented economic development and industrialization from the 1960s to 1990s. Since then, it has become one of the most robustly high-tech-driven economies, in which nearly everyone has access to broadband Internet and high-quality cellphone service. This SPICE unit is a relatively well-constructed, thoughtful unit on the political economy of South Korea. It should be useful in high school and first- or second-year general education survey courses such as world history, economics, human geography, and introductory courses on comparative politics and Asian studies. As is the case with all SPICE units, *Economic Development: The Case of South Korea* includes a comprehensive introduction for teachers, the provision of supplemental teacher information included at various places in the unit, and student opportunities to engage in a wide range of activities

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and assignments. The unit includes PowerPoints and supplementary video. Each of the lessons is simple to understand for students and easy to employ for instructors, and each lesson builds on what has come in previous lessons. Most lessons can be taught in two to four fifty-minute periods.

The unit is divided into four lessons. Lesson 1, “Setting the Context,” includes activities that introduce students to the Korean peninsula; Korea’s history, particularly since the division; and the postwar economic history of South Korea. In the latter part of the lesson, students learn about the concept of economic development and what makes economies grow. In lesson 2, which includes a video lecture by a Stanford economist, the focus is upon four economic “drivers” of ROK economic growth: exports, education, government policy, and *jaebols* (*chaebols*), or private conglomerates.

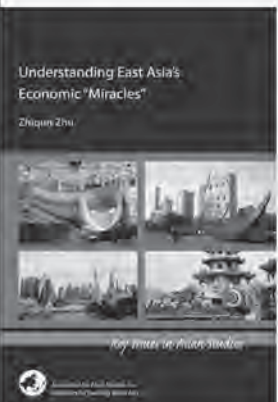
Lesson 3 arguably could be titled “Entertainment Industry” rather than “Hallyu Industry,” since Koreans do not use the term *Hallyu* to refer to the industry. Hallyu is, rather, a term referring to the phenomenon of Korean popular culture finding success in neighboring countries in recent years (often called the Hallyu Wave). Students explore the global popularity of Korean popular culture, including television series (K-dramas), music, computer games, and, more recently, food.

Lesson 4’s focus is upon the future, and through various activities including a class debate, students consider the aging of the Korean population, economic inequality, the question of the division of the peninsula, and the prospects of reunification.

Since most North American students know little about the ROK, this unit is a highly useful introductory educational tool. However, students with a special interest in the ROK and its rise should be encouraged to also learn about the drama of the ROK’s rise, both the Korean ascendance from being some of Asia’s poorest people to some of the continent’s most affluent populations, and the wrenching political and social changes they endured during this transformation. The most serious students’ educational experiences will be enhanced by learning the evocative stories of key persons or events in modern Korean history or business. These could include such key political leaders as Park Chung Hee and Kim Dae Jung, and such business leaders as Chung Joo Yung and Kim Woo Jong. Key events might include the coup d’état of 1961, the downturn of the late 1970s, the shift to high-tech production in the 1980s, the popular revolution of 1987, and the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997–1998. Comparisons of the ROK’s rise with that of the other “Little Tigers,” Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, will be of much benefit to gifted and interested students. The whole debate over the costs and benefits of the Capitalist Development State is another rich area of inquiry for students thirsting for more knowledge about the ROK. ■

JOEL R. CAMPBELL is an Associate Professor of Political Science in the Pacific Region (Japan and Korea) of the Global Campus program of Troy University. He teaches in the Masters of Science in International Relations (MSIR) program. He has taught at Tohoku University, Miyazaki International College, and Kansai Gaidai University in Japan, as well as three universities in Korea. He has published extensively on his principal research interests, the politics and political economy of Northeast Asia, along with technology policy and international security. He can be reached at jrcampbell@troy.edu.

Key Issues in Asian Studies



Understanding East Asia's Economic "Miracles"
Zhiqun Zhu

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New! UNDERSTANDING EAST ASIAN'S ECONOMIC MIRACLES
(2016 updated & revised reprint)
by Zhiqun Zhu

"Concise yet comprehensive, Zhiqun Zhu's book is the perfect introduction to the political economy of East Asia for undergraduate and advanced high school classes. Zhu's analysis of the economic 'miracles' of Japan, South Korea, China and Taiwan takes into account both domestic factors and the international environment, and is sensitive to the similarities as well as differences between the developmental experiences of these nations. Zhu raises important related issues such as the connections between economic development and democratization, the relative economic contributions of the state and the market, and the portability of the East Asian developmental model. A glossary of abbreviations, timeline, and extensive bibliography add to the pedagogical values of this book."

- Robert Y. Eng
Professor of History, University of Redlands

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