

# The Logic of Compressed Modernity

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# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose, Debates, and Subjects

### 1.1 Purpose

South Korean society is marked by quite a curious mix of extreme social traits and tendencies.<sup>1</sup> With a per capita GDP of more than thirty thousand U.S. dollars, many of the world's leading industries, and the world's highest level of tertiary education completion, South Koreans may certainly boast, to both foreigners and themselves, of their "miracle" economic and social achievements, which were built upon the debris from a total civil war, besides decades of colonial exploitation. By contrast, a long series of social problems at internationally scandalous levels keep afflicting and embarrassing South Koreans, such as household indebtedness, elderly poverty, suicide, and even tuberculosis infection at some of the worst levels among all industrialized nations. On the other hand, South Korean workers still work more than two thousand hours annually along with just a few other countries, South Korean students study far more hours than all their foreign counterparts in the world, and South Korean elderly keep extending their laboring years beyond any known level in the world. Demographically, South Korea's fertility, which is at the world's lowest level (e.g. a total fertility rate of 0.84 in 2020), and its life expectancy, which is rising at the world's fastest pace, are predicted to make its population to age more rapidly than that of any other society.<sup>2</sup> What I have viewed for many years as the country's *compressed modernity* is full of extreme social traits and tendencies that often appear mutually contradictory. Given contemporary South Korea's seemingly incomparable intensities, velocities, complexities, and contradictions in all aspects of social order and personal life, it is hard to imagine that this society

used to be called a “hermit kingdom” after it was first exposed to Westerners.

How can social sciences deal with this miraculous yet simultaneously obstinate and hysterical society? South Korea’s global prominence in developmental, sociopolitical, and cultural affairs has not only impressed overseas media and public but also motivated numerous internationally respectable scholars to analyze its experiences as a potential basis of new patterns or possibilities in postcolonial modernization and development.<sup>3</sup> Despite their persuasive accounts of diverse aspects of South Korean modernity, its general social scientific implications and influences have been relatively limited. Their findings and interpretations, despite various substantive contributions, have failed to develop into an inclusive disciplinary paradigm. This is not necessarily because South Korean experiences have been largely idiosyncratic and thus difficult to apply to other societies and/or to distill generalizable theoretical implications. Some of them have scientifically constrained themselves by attempting to explain South Korea’s performances in modernization and development according to somewhat ideologically or normatively fused perspectives, respectively underlining Confucian values, colonial modernization, state interventionism, global liberal order, and so on. More crucially, most of them have failed to predict repeatedly degenerative tendencies in South Korea’s industrial capitalism, democracy, grassroots livelihood, and even demographic reproduction. Their scientific and intellectual influence has fluctuated in accordance with South Korea’s built-in instabilities in nearly all domains.

More conventional social sciences, whether at the international or domestic level, do not appear to have been more successful in systematically and effectively elucidating what genuinely constitutes universally appreciable Koreanness. In the so-called mainstream social sciences in Europe and North America, South Korea has largely been subjected to disciplinary indifference, if not ignorance. Paradoxically, South Korean universities have mostly relied on such lines of social sciences for education and even research. Social sciences in general have been imported from the West (especially, the United States) mainly through South Korean PhDs from major Western universities and dispatched to South Korean realities throughout the post-liberation era (Kim, J. 2015). Educational institutional modernization has thereby been achieved quite rapidly and even intensely, but their scientific contributions in systematically probing and theorizing South Korean realities have remained largely ambiguous (Park and Chang 1999). In certain disciplines, there is even a tendency for internationally established

scholars to avoid South Korea as their research subject. Borrowed Western social sciences in the South Korean context, no matter how much adapted locally, have critically added to the complicated nature of South Korean modernity by inundating this society with hasty speculative prescriptions under the assumption of Westernization-as-modernization. Many domestically trained scholars have responded to this dilemma by proposing the construction of “indigenous social sciences” or “Korean-style social sciences.”<sup>4</sup> However, South Korean society’s distinctiveness since the last century seems to have consisted much more critically in its explosive and complex digestion (and indigestion) of Western modernity than in some isolated characteristics inherited from its own past.

In a stark contrast to the virtually *intended inefficacy* of conventional social sciences in analyzing South Korean realities, there are abundant cultural creations and productions that have most brilliantly captured and processed them into quite meaningful forms of aesthetic and intellectual experiences. In particular, many of South Korea’s films, television dramas, novels, and various performing arts have quite admirably articulated what its people and society have gone through in the endlessly turbulent but frequently spectacular moments of its modern history. Their skillful mastery of South Korea’s social realities and experiences often enjoys such praises from media and expert critics as would elicit strong jealousy from academic social scientists.<sup>5</sup> After all, their social appeal has been proved globally – that is, not only in South Korea but also nearly across the world – in terms of show attendance sizes, television viewer rates, numbers of film seers, digits of webpage visitors, and magnitudes of SNS followers that may have been even unthinkable before. Such global popularity of South Korea’s cultural productions has necessitated a special term for symbolically denoting their Koreanness, namely, “the Korean wave” (*hallyu*). Given that most of the Korean wave productions substantively reflect South Korean realities and experiences, their global popularities attest to a sort of transnationalized (aesthetic) reflection on common or diverse conditions of human life and society in reference to the South Korean context.<sup>6</sup> This trend was epitomized by the Oscar-awarded movie, *Parasite*, which masterfully narrates underclass South Koreans’ struggle in everyday realities of (what I analyze in this book as) compressed modernity and has thereby elicited fervent viewer reactions across the world.

On my part, since the early 1990s, I have tried to show what I holistically conceptualize and theorize as compressed modernity can help to construe, on the one hand, the extreme changes, rigidities,

complexities, intensities, and imbalances in South Korean life and, on the other hand, analyze interrelationships among such traits and components. Fortunately, this line of effort has been significantly validated by the pluralist turn in international scholarship on modernity and coloniality (Eisenstadt 2000) and by many scholars' constructive reactions to my work on compressed modernity in studying South Korea and other Asian societies in particular. The research topics and focus areas of such studies include: family relations and individualization in East Asia (e.g. Ochiai 2011; Lan, P. 2014, 2016; Hao, L. 2013; Jackson 2015); life world and life histories in Korean modernity (e.g. Yi et al. 2017); care system and social policy in East Asia (e.g. Shibata 2009, 2010; Ochiai 2014); sociopolitical structure of risk and disaster in South Korea (e.g. Suh and Kim, eds. 2017); all genres of "the Korean wave" (e.g. Martin-Jones 2007; Paik, P. 2012; Koblinska 2017; Lee, K. 2004; Abelman 2003; Jang and Kim 2013; Regatieri 2017; Kim, H. 2018); Asian modernity and development in general (e.g. Kang, M. 2011; Yui 2012; Yi, J. 2015); and so forth. Most recently, some scholars both in China and overseas have analyzed post-Mao China as an instance of post-socialist compressed modernity (e.g. Wang, Z. 2015; Zhang, L. 2013; Xu and Wu 2016).<sup>7</sup>

Many of these studies have utilized the concept of compressed modernity, despite its theoretical vagueness and substantive openness, as a heuristic theoretical and/or analytical tool for organizing and interpreting their empirical findings. Perhaps the utility of compressed modernity consists more in its broad intermediary function between researchers and realities than any theoretically specific explanatory function. For the reason explained just above, the theoretical and/or analytical adoption of compressed modernity in comparative cultural studies that attempt to decipher the Korean wave's social substances and messages is quite an interesting development. Compressed modernity in South Korean realities and experiences may have been crucially perceived, whether consciously or unconsciously, by cultural producers as a heuristic clue to the main conditions and characteristics of contemporary South Korean society.

In my work on South Korean/East Asian compressed modernity, I have quite actively incorporated international scholarship on comparative modernities as broadly defined (to include postcolonialism and postmodernism). This is of course to draw critical insights from the world's authoritative analysts and writers on the globally fundamental yet contentious issues of modernity and its various reconstructive and degenerative tendencies. At the same time, I have been keen to explore potential contributory possibilities in the

global debates on comparative modernities on the basis of Korean/Asian experiences. These motivations have materialized into close discussions and collaborations with numerous distinct scholars on their key work as follows: Ulrich Beck (reflexive modernization and cosmopolitization), Göran Therborn (entangled modernities), Bryan S. Turner (citizenship as contributory rights), Hubert Knoblauch (refiguration), Emiko Ochiai (compressed demographic transitions in Asia), Laurence Roulleau-Berger (post-Western social sciences), Stevi Jackson (gender in East Asia), Nancy Abelmann (family and mobility in South Korea), Seung-Sook Moon (mobilizational citizenship in South Korea), Hagen Koo (class formation in South Korea), Chua Beng Huat (“pop culture” in Asia, the Korean wave), as well as many of South Korea’s key experts.

Critically building upon these earlier efforts, I intend to present a new book on compressed modernity, in which I present a more formalized explanation of compressed modernity in the South Korean and comparative contexts, and elucidate a special set of topics on South Korea’s compressed modernity as its essential systemic properties. More specifically, I hope to elaborate on the definitional and structural constitution of compressed modernity and discuss some of the most essential systemic properties of compressed modernity as manifested in the South Korean context. The primary purpose of the book is to provide a sort of soft treatise on compressed modernity as a generic category of modernity in the modern world history. On the other hand, various systemic properties of compressed modernity will be presented in analytical narrative built upon a wide range of empirical observations, both by myself and in literature. I hope the definitional and inclusive nature of the current book will be found useful by a wide range of international scholars interested or engaged in the issues of comparative modernities, social structure and change in South Korea/East Asia, citizenship of South Koreans/East Asians, Asian popular culture, Asians’ family life and personhood, comparative social policy and care system, and so forth.

## 1.2 Compressed Modernity in Critical Modernity Debates

Compressed modernity is a critical theory of postcolonial social change, aspiring to join and learn from the main self-critical intellectual reactions since the late twentieth century as to complex and murky social realities in the late modern world. Such intellectual reactions include postmodernism (Lyotard 1984, etc.), postcolonialism

(Chakrabarty 2000; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2002, etc.), reflexive modernization (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994, etc.), and multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2000, etc.). Postmodernism forcefully argues that modernity has exhausted or abused its progressive potential, if any, only to spawn deleterious conditions and tendencies for humanity and its civilizational and ecological basis. Postcolonialism cogently reveals that postcolonial modernization and development have been far from a genuinely liberating process due to the chronic (re)manifestation of colonial and neocolonial patterns of social relations and cognitive practices in the supposedly liberated Third World. Reflexive modernization in late modern reality, as argued by Beck and Giddens, is a structurally complicated process of social change under the uncontrollable floods of choices that expose modern society and people to more risks than opportunities. The multiple modernities thesis emphasizes a comparative civilizational perspective that helps to recognize variegated possibilities and forms of modernities in the diverse historical and structural contexts for nation-making or national revival. As directly indicated or indirectly alluded to in various parts of this chapter, all of these critical debates on modernity have essential implications for the compressed modernity thesis.

The problem of time-space condensation here was presented as a core subject in David Harvey's (1980) seminal discussion of Western modernism and postmodernism. In essence, according to Harvey, the accumulation crisis of capitalism and the effort to overcome it led to the expansion of controllable space and the generalization of mechanical time, which ultimately engendered time-space condensation (or, in Harvey's wording, "time-space compression") *on the global scale*. In this regard, Harvey argues, there are fundamental similarities in the objects that modernism and postmodernism respectively try to explain and overcome. While his emphasis on "the annihilation of space through time" and "the spatialization of time" involves the complex functional interrelationships between time and space (Harvey 1980: 270), it by and large focuses on what I present here as *time-space condensation*. As compared to Harvey's view that time-space condensation (on the global scale) accompanies the accumulation crisis of capitalism at each stage and the aggressive effort to overcome it, the time-space condensation and compression in compressed modernity at national and other levels involve much more diverse historical backgrounds, factors, and initiators.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, the phenomena argued by main theorists of postcolonialism (such as cultural "hybridity," "syncrécité," etc.) can also be included in time-space compression (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin



2002).<sup>9</sup> If this literary criticism-derived theory is extended to cover social phenomena in general, most authors of postcolonialism seem to acknowledge the status of politically liberated Third World grassroots and intellectuals as concrete historical and social subjects, but still think that their spiritual, material, and institutional lives have not fundamentally overcome colonial and/or neocolonial (Western) cultures and values, but have combined the latter with indigenous elements in diverse ways.<sup>10</sup> It is true that postcolonial culture can be both “oppositional” and “complicit” with regard to (neo)colonial order and that, in the former case, colonial (Western) cultures and values, if any, may be conceived as something to be criticized and overcome. Similarly, in the specific aspects of time–space compression in this study, the process by which various cultures and institutions positioned at dissimilar points of the two axes of time and space interact and intermingle is open to a possibility of being dictated by the ideology, value, and will of many people as concrete historical and social subjects. It needs to be pointed out, however, that the breadth of cultures and institutions that are subject to compression here is much wider than that suggested by postcolonialism so as to include even postmodern and global elements. It also needs to be pointed out that the facets of compression here are not limited to hybridity or syncretism but involve competition, collision, disjointing, articulation, compounding, and so forth.

The diverse dimensions of compressed modernity are emergent patterns of social structure and change that can be analyzed only in concrete historical and societal contexts. Therefore, the formation and transformation of compressed modernity in any nation need to be explained under a systematic and comprehensive examination of its global historical and structural conditions. In so doing, Therborn’s thesis of “entangled modernities” offers a highly useful hint at the social and institutional outcomes of complex interactions and interrelations between international and local agencies of modernity. According to Therborn (2003: 295), “[b]ecause of its modes of historical generation, modernity has to be seen as a global phenomenon” . . . and requires a “global approach . . . focusing on global variability, global connectivity, and global inter-communication.” Therborn (2003: 295) goes on to point out two “general processes of the making of modernity,” namely, “the constitutive entanglements of modernity and some tradition, coming out of the infinitely variable incompleteness of every modern rupture with the past, and out of the plasticity of most traditions” and “the geo-historical entanglements, of the very different but significantly interacting and mutually

influencing sociopolitical roads to and through modernity.” Many nations’ global historical and structural conditions of modernization clearly demonstrate that geo-historical entanglements – and sometimes modernity-tradition entanglements as well – tend frequently or chronically to induce a compressed nature in the thereby generated modernities. While Therborn’s (2003) thesis on “entangled modernities” is a crucial epistemological progress, it should be carefully complemented by astute attention to the importance of concrete historical agencies (as opposed to abstract structural conditions) in analyzing wide varieties of political, sociocultural, and economic transformations under the global order of modernity. This theoretical-cum-empirical necessity is most persuasively argued in Bruno Latour’s (2005) “practical metaphysics” about inexhaustibly diverse ontological manifestations of values, purposes, and resources in the (debatably) modern world. Postcolonial entanglement of modernities, in all instances, has involved critical human and institutional agencies that have, often self-consciously but not always successfully, conveyed, accommodated, abused, modified, intensified, and/or resisted such global structural relations. This should be understood as a crucial part of what John Urry (2003) analyzed as “global complexity.”

This has been the case even when entanglements have involved fundamental civilizational or systemic discontinuities as suggested by Ulrich Beck (Beck and Grande 2010) and Anthony Giddens (1990). Giddens emphasizes the qualitatively distinctive nature of modern social institutions (as opposed to traditional social orders), whereas Beck highlights the discrete characteristics of late or “second” modernity” (as opposed to early or “first” modernity). To the extent that South Koreans, among others, have incorporated West-originated modern social institutions into their local life, the *discontinuitist* interpretation recommended by Giddens and Beck will be methodologically and theoretically indispensable. However, a more critical utility of the discontinuitist approach consists in the very fact that various versions of *Western* modernity have arrived in South Korea or elsewhere mainly through political coercions and decisions (that is, as direct effects of international power relations) rather than as evolutionary adaptations. When West-originated social institutions, values, and goals are attained in condensed manners, or when they are compressively compounded with traditional and indigenous elements, their discontinuous – or, more correctly, dissimilar – nature in the South Korean or other context cannot but be responsible for social confusion, conflict, and alienation. Paradoxically, it is also

true that such discontinuous nature can become useful for inducing, suppressing, or even deceiving potentially resistant local subjects and interests in strategically determined directions of social change. Abrupt institutional (or ideological) replacement is sometimes much more feasible than gradual institutional (or ideological) reform because local resistance is epistemologically and/or socioecologically more difficult in the former situation.

While the condensed and compressive nature of South Korean or other modernity has been induced and intensified by their particular historical and structural conditions, it needs to be pointed out that modernity in general has an intrinsic dynamism. Giddens (1990: 16–17) indicates three main conditions for such dynamism of modernity: namely, “the separation of time and space and their recombination in forms which permit the precise time–space ‘zoning’ of social life; the disembedding of social systems . . .; and the reflexive ordering and reordering of social relations in the light of continual inputs of knowledge affecting the actions of individuals and groups.” These complex conditions cannot be reproduced identically in every society, but it is safe to say that they are thoroughly relevant in the South Korean context as well. In fact, such conditions seem to have been intensified due to the transnational superimposition of modernity in South Korea under Japanese domination and American influence and, more critically, due to the South Koreans’ own drive for dependent modernization and globalization. Beck (Beck and Grande 2010) presents “second modernity” as a critical alternative to postmodernity, arguing that various (mostly negative) “side-effects” of first or classic modernity add up to a qualitatively different situation in which the fundamental values of classic modernity are still respected, but have to be pursued with radically different social means and institutions under a cosmopolitan paradigm. Beck disputes “methodological nationalism” in social theory and analysis and instead advocates “methodological cosmopolitanism.” In a sense, compressed modernity is already based upon methodological cosmopolitanism since it directly acknowledges and reflects global processes and structures by which the nature of modernity in late-modernizing societies is critically determined. Therborn (2003) also shares this globalist conception of all modernities.

As discussed in detail later in Chapters 2 and 4, the multiple modernities thesis (Eisenstadt 2000) can be extended to the internal multiplicity of modernities across varying units or agencies of modernity in each national society such as individuals, families, secondary organizations, localities, as well as societal units. Such

internal multiplicity on the one hand reflects the varying complexities of time-space (era-place) compression across different units of (compressed) modernity and, on the other hand, induces national modernity to take on an inherently complicated nature. Besides, the emphasis of Therborn's (2003) entangled modernities thesis on "not just the co-existence of different modernities but also their interrelations" is directly relevant for the inter-unit interactive variability of (compressed) modernities discussed here. The authoritarian attribute of many postcolonial states in leading dependent modernization as often induces or intensifies this internal multiplicity of modernities as reduces or integrates it (see Chapter 4 in this book). The recent globalization trend, despite its dominant neoliberal impetus, tends to necessitate subnational (and supranational) units to intensify their separate efforts and independent functions for actively coping with the floods of new risks and opportunities in the global age and thereby reinforce their status as units of compressed modernity (Chang, K. 2016a).

### 1.3 Subjects

This book consists of three parts, respectively entitled: "Part I. Compressed Modernity in Perspective"; "Part II. Structural Properties of Compressed Modernity"; and "Part III. After Compressed Modernity." Part I offers, besides the current introduction chapter, two chapters that respectively explain the definitional and universal aspects of compressed modernity. Part II includes six chapters that respectively deal with the internal multiplicity of modernities, the particular mode of citizenship under compressed modernity, the complexity of the cultural configuration of compressed modernity, the productionist bias and reproductive crisis in development, the social institutional deficits and infrastructural familialism, and the demographic configuration of compressed modernity. Part III concludes the current book with a chapter discussing South Korea's post-compressed modern condition loaded with the dual burdens arising from, on the one hand, the earlier risky schemes of compressed modernization and development and, on the other hand, the common dilemmas accompanying social and economic maturation (or saturation). Although these diverse topics already constitute a sizable monograph, there are numerous other theoretical and empirical issues that need to be covered in order to provide a reasonably self-contained scientific account of compressed modernity. Nonetheless,

this book is presented as a tentative general treatise on compressed modernity. Each of the above-mentioned chapters is briefly summarized as follows.

In Chapter 2, “Compressed Modernity: Constitutive Dimensions and Manifesting Units,” I intend to present a formal definition and core theoretical/historical components of compressed modernity. Compressed modernity consists of multiple dimensions constructed by all possible combinations of temporal (historical) and spatial (civilizational) manifestations of human social activities, relationships, and assets – namely, temporal condensation of historical change, spatial condensation of civilizational compass, compressed mixing of diverse temporalities (eras), compressed mixing of diverse spaces (civilizations), and interactions among the above. Compressed modernity can be manifested at various levels of human existence and experience – that is, personhood, family, secondary organizations, urban/rural localities, societal units (including civil society, nation, etc.), and, not least importantly, the global society. At each of these levels, people’s lives need to be managed intensely, intricately, and flexibly in order to remain normally integrated with the rest of society. Compressed modernity is a critical theory of postcolonial social change, aspiring to join and learn from the main self-critical intellectual reactions of the late twentieth century as to complex and murky social realities in the late modern world, including postmodernism, postcolonialism, reflexive modernization, and multiple modernities.

In today’s rapidly and intricately globalizing world, as shown in Chapter 3, “Compressed Modernity in the Universalist Perspective,” the driving forces of radical scientific-technical-cultural inputs and monopolistic political economic interests operate across national boundaries without serious obstacles. The liberal system transition of former state-socialist countries has intensified the globalizing nature of such inputs and interests. However, the ecological, material, and sociocultural risks accompanying the latest capitalist offense are not unidirectional (from developed to less developed nations) any more. Even developed nations cannot pass up the cosmopolit(an)ized hazards and pressures generated in the very process of their global economic and political domination over less developed nations. Managing these challenges, as well as exploiting the associated opportunities, by individual nations implies that internalization of cosmopolit(an)ized reflexivity takes place both in developed and less developed (capitalist and post-socialist) nations. Through this process, societies (or their civilizational conditions) are being internalized into each other, thereby making compressed modernity become a

universal feature of national societies in the late modern world. In fact, the same is also true of individual communities, organizations, families, and persons.

As explained in Chapter 4, “Internal Multiple Modernities: South Korea as Multiplex Theatre Society,” modernity – and the process of modernization – can be plural not only across different national societies, as persuasively indicated in Eisenstadt’s “multiple modernities” thesis, but also within each national society. Korea has been particularly distinct in such internal multiplicity of modernities, including colonial dialectical modernity, postcolonial reflexive institutional(ist) modernization, postcolonial neotraditionalist modernity, free world modernity under the Cold War, state-capitalist modernity, cosmopolitan modernity under neoliberal economic globalism, and associative subaltern liberal modernity. These internally diverse modernities reflect a series of overpowering international influences and related local upheavals and confrontations to which Korean society and its people have been subjected since the late nineteenth century. Each of these modernities is not uniquely or exclusively Korean because they have been embedded in the global structures and processes of modern social change. Nevertheless, South Korea is certainly remarkable in the volume of multiplicities of modernities, the dramatic and intense realization of each modernity, the protracted operation of each modernity, and the extremely complex interactions among such multiple modernities. With all such impetuses and forms of modernities permanently extending their lifespan as variously embodied in the identities and interests of different generations, genders, classes, sectors, and/or regions, South Korea has been socially configured and reconfigured as a *multiplex theater society* in which all possible claims of modernities are aggressively and loudly staged side by side and/or one after another, however, without a clear clue to civilizational or sociopolitical reconciliation among them.

As detailed in Chapter 5, “Transformative Contributory Rights: Citizen(ship) in Compressed Modernity,” the life histories of most South Koreans since the mid twentieth century have been replete with dramatic institutional, developmental, sociopolitical, and ethnonational transformations and crises through which their nation and society have emerged with fully blown (compressed) modernity. In each of these drastic and fundamental transitions, South Koreans have had to confront not only the difficulties inherent in such radical transitions but, more critically, the troubles ensuing from the crude institutional conditions for managing them. While both

the state and civil society were unstable, with their own survival remaining in question, the internal conditions and international environments required them to embark on, among other changes, rapid institutional and techno-scientific modernization and aggressive economic development. In fact, such transformations were often pursued in order to strategically trounce the sociopolitical dilemmas stemming from the inchoate, dependent, and even illegitimate nature of the state machinery and dominant social order. There have arisen *transformation-oriented state, society, and population for which each transformation becomes an ultimate purpose in itself, the processes and means of the transformations constitute the main sociopolitical order, and the transformation-embedded interests form the core social identity*. In this milieu, a distinct mode of citizenship has been engendered in terms of *transformative contributory rights*. Citizenship as transformative contributory rights can be defined as *effective and/or legitimate claims to national and social resources, opportunities, and/or respects that accrue to each citizen's contributions to the nation's or society's transformative purposes*. As South Korea has been aggressively and precipitously engaged in institutional and techno-scientific modernization, economic development, political democratization, economic and sociocultural globalization, and, mostly recently, ethnonational reformation, its citizens have been exhorted or have exhorted themselves to engage intensely in each of these transformations, and their citizenship, constituted by identities, duties, and rights, have been very much framed and substantiated by the conditions, processes, and outcomes of such transformative engagements.

As explained in Chapter 6, "Complex-Culturalism vs. Multiculturalism," the literally explosive growth of transnational marriages between Korean men and mostly Asian women from the beginning years of the twenty-first century seemingly signals that South Korea has entered a genuinely new epoch of cosmopolitan existence and change. This unprecedented phenomenon has drastically reconfigured diverse corners and peripheries of South Korea into manifestly multi-ethnic entities. The national and local governments have been quick in initiating a comprehensive policy of "multicultural family support," whereas various civil groups, media, and even business corporations have echoed the governmental drive with their own multiculturalism initiatives. On the other hand, as agencies of what I define here as *complex culturalism*, South Korean institutions and citizens have instrumentally, selectively, and flexibly incorporated into themselves various historical and civilizational sources of culture

in order to expediently consolidate the postcolonial sociopolitical order and then to maximize socioeconomic development. In this vein, neither the legal acceptance and physical integration of rapidly increasing numbers of foreign brides into South Korean society, nor the accompanying governmental and civil drive for multiculturalism, implies that this society used to be culturally isolated, or that it only now wishes to convert into a multicultural or cosmopolitan entity. The mass presence of “multicultural brides” seems to have further reinforced complex culturalism by enabling South Korean citizens and institutions to conveniently interpret that their open accommodation and active support for the marriage migrants help make their cultural complexity a more self-contained civilizational property. However, the more their multiculturalism as part of their self-centered globalism is framed through arbitrarily staged experiences, the more the Asian marriage migrants will remain differentiated, if not discriminated, from native Koreans. What remains to be seen is if these foreign brides would permanently be asked or forced to preserve and display their home-country cultural characteristics as an indispensable condition for native South Koreans’ still elementary multicultural experiences and feelings.

In South Korea (and other East Asian societies), as indicated in Chapter 7, “Productive Maximization, Reproductive Meltdown,” compressed modernity is to a critical extent the process and outcome of the developmental(ist) political economy that has been forcefully initiated from above (i.e. by the state), yet actively accommodated from below (i.e. by ordinary citizens). Modernity was conceived in a fundamentally developmentalist or productionist manner, so modernization principally became the politico-social project of achieving time-condensed economic development and thereby joining the world rank of “advanced nations.” Such purposeful approach to modernity in terms of condensed national development has been substantiated by various policies, actions, and attitudes that are designed to maximize economic production and, not coincidentally, to systematically sacrifice the conditions and resources of social reproduction. After decades of successful economic development, such asymmetrical approach to production and reproduction seems to have critically lost its instrumentality. In spite of their enviable façade, covered with hyper-advanced industries, physical infrastructures, services, and lifestyles, the civilizational and even economic progress of South Korean society is now crucially impeded by the disenfranchisement and demise of those classes, generations, communities, cultures, and wisdoms that have been treated practically as *disposables*, unworthy



of social reproduction support, under the narrowly focused developmental political economy.

In a fundamentally family-dependent way, as emphasized in Chapter 8, “Social Institutional Deficits and Infrastructural Familialism,” South Koreans have managed their modern history and made various internationally envious achievements. The compressed nature of their modernity is structurally enmeshed with various social infrastructural utilities of families. This feature of South Korean society has been derived not just from its traditional – say, neo-Confucian – heritage of family-centered life but, more critically, from the processes and manners by which South Koreans have coped with various modern sociocultural, political, and economic forces. Even after the state managed effectively to govern national economic development and social institutional modernization, South Koreans’ reliance on familial norms, relations, and resources have remained unabated. In fact, the familialized nature of South Korean modernity has kept intensifying, albeit in continually refashioning modes, as the state and its allied social actors have found and consciously tapped various strategic utilities from ordinary people’s eager effort to sustain their family-centered/devoted lives. This has been evident concerning nearly all major features and conditions of South Korean development and modernization, such as early Lewisian industrialization based upon stable supplies of rural migrant labor, universalization of high-level public education enabling constant improvements in human capital, and sustained common ethic for familial support and care buffering chronically defective public welfare. The state’s own practically driven familialist stance is not reducible to sheer private family values, but represents a distinct line of technocratic deliberation, conceptualized here as *infrastructural familialism*. Conversely, the state’s such utilitarian familialism has made individual citizens realize that their developmental and sociopolitical participation in national life is systematically facilitated through familial allegiance and cooperation. Infrastructural familialism has been upheld both from above and from below.

Since the early 1960s, as detailed in Chapter 9, “The Demographic Configuration of Compressed Modernity,” South Korea has undergone extremely rapid and fundamental transformation in both demographic and developmental dimensions. The rates of migration/urbanization, fertility, and mortality all kept changing at such unprecedented and incomparable paces that also characterized those of economic growth, industrialization, proletarianization (occupational change from agricultural to industrial sectors), and so forth. This

*dual transformation* was no coincidence, as the country's developmental experiences directly involved critical demographic conditions, processes, and consequences. South Korean development, though dominated by state-business network, relied on human resources in extraordinary scopes and degrees; whereas South Korean citizens – quite often through demographically flexible familial endeavors – rendered their human resources a strategic platform for active developmental participation and gain. Conversely, South Korea's recent economic crisis and restructuring – namely, its post-developmental transition – have both required and caused drastic reformulation of human resources, family relations, and reproductive behaviors, so that earlier demographic trends have been further accelerated in some aspects (e.g. fertility, population aging, etc.) and suddenly slowed down or reversed in other aspects (e.g. natal sex imbalances, divorce, suicide, etc.). Through half a century of radical sociodemographic changes, the country has dramatically turned from a society known for very high fertility, universal marriage, rare divorce, etc., into one of “lowest-low” fertility, widespread singlehood, rampant divorce, etc. As these demographic transformations tend to fundamentally undermine the hitherto taken-for-granted material and cultural conditions for socioeconomic sustainability, the country has aggressively explored strategic measures for reversing or relieving demographic deficits and imbalances.

As pointed out in Chapter 10, “The Post-Compressed Modern Condition,” South Korea's “miraculous” achievement of modernization and development has not exempted the country from what Ulrich Beck explained as the risks of “second modernity” – namely, the inherent dysfunctions and increasing failures of modern institutions such as capitalist industry, labor market, education system, science and technology, national government, middle-class family, and so forth. While these onerous risks are only now recognized, South Koreans are struggling with additional predicaments derived from the particular measures and processes of their compressed modernization and development. Conversely, at the very historical moment that South Korean society should embark on fundamentally redressing the costs of such risky measures of compressed social and economic transformations, its people are confronted with the globally common prices to be paid at the supposedly mature stage of development and modernization. This is South Korea's *post-compressed modern* condition, which appears no less challenging than its immediate post-colonial condition plagued with poverty and hunger, political rifts, and social conflicts and dislocations.