

*The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea*. Edited by BYUNG-KOOK KIM and EZRA VOGEL. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011. vii, 744 pp. \$55.00 (cloth).  
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*The Park Chung Hee Era: The Transformation of South Korea* covers diverse topics concerning a period marked by the most important changes in modern Korean history. It is divided into five parts. Part 1 is entitled “Born in Crisis” and deals with the coup d’état and Park’s military junta. Part 2, “Politics,” focuses on the ideas of Park Chung Hee and his political foundation as represented by military and economic bureaucrats. Part 3, “Economy and Society,” analyzes economic growth, rural society, and the *Chaeyea*, otherwise known as the dissident intelligentsia. Part 4, “International Relations,” discusses U.S.-ROK relations within the context of the Vietnam War, “Koreagate,” the nuclear program, and Korea-Japan Normalization. Finally, part 5, “Comparative Perspective,” compares Park Chung Hee and his legacy with that of other leaders and regions within the same period.

This book is significant because it is the first to comprehensively cover the whole of the Park Chung Hee era while dealing with a broad range of topics, such as politics, economics, and society. Although there have been past literatures focusing on specific issues pertaining to Park, such as international relations or economic issues, as well as studies dealing with the Park period as a part of larger case studies on developmental states, these have yet to provide a comprehensive picture of the era.

Nevertheless, this book misses diverse social and cultural issues, particularly lacking attention to the democratization movement. Perhaps this is because, as the introduction of this book reveals, the editor considers the volume as a political history of the era. Aside from the debatable assertion that including only the works of political scientists in a literature review amounts to a work of political history, all of the authors pay no attention to materials written by historians, while most of the chapters do concentrate on historical resources rather than on political science theories.

Most of the writings are based on historiography favorably evaluating Park Chung Hee, his policy, and his government. For instance, Korea’s dispatch of troops to Vietnam, which has been commonly criticized within the annals of world history, is seen as a success of Park Chung Hee’s leadership that elevated Korea onto the world stage at the time. Moreover, the relationship between the bureaucracy and the *chaebol* is simply evaluated as a mutually complementary partnership, ignoring the corruption therein.

Of course, some of the contributors, including Byung-Kook Kim, a main editor, provided some critical interpretation. In particular, his section entitled “The Labyrinth of Solitude” analyzes how Park Chung Hee’s influence within the operations of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), the Economic Planning Board, and the Blue House resulted in the vicious practices of

repressive rule. Furthermore, Kim concludes that the legacies of Park Chung Hee include the *chaebol* system, money politics, and the repressive policies of the KCIA, which have had quite a negative and lasting legacy.

Although differing historiographies appear in the book, overall it is characterized by a consistent feature. That is, this book contends that one of the essential characteristics of the Park Chung Hee era was that almost all areas of society were driven by the decision making of Park Chung Hee alone. Therefore, as the introduction suggests, Western theories and concepts, such as the Weberian Developmental State, are insufficient to fully elucidate the Park Chung Hee era.

What is also noteworthy is that the book asserts that the United States' role should not be overemphasized. For example, Park's establishment of the Yushin system was entirely unilateral. However, as presented in chapter 16, entitled "The Security, Political, and Human Rights Conundrum, 1974–1979," and chapter 17, called "Search for Deterrence: Park's Nuclear Option," during this period the Park regime was quite limited in its policy options, eventually leading to the downfall of the Yushin system. Thus, Park's unilateralism can be explained by the differences in the degree of hegemonic influence of the United States before and after the Nixon administration. In other words, considering that the creation of Park's Yushin system was not a political phenomenon peculiar to 1972 Korea, as a similar system appeared in the Philippines in the same year, the relatively autonomous power in South Korea can be explained as a result of the weakening of U.S. hegemony following the introduction of the Nixon Doctrine, rather than as the outcome of Park Chung Hee's policy.

Finally, the last chapter of this book, which compares the policies of the Park Chung Hee administration with those in other governments, as well as Park himself with other leaders, is an important attempt to confer universality on the Park Chung Hee era within world history. This endeavor contributes to comparative studies that are so crucial in arriving at a more accurate understanding of Park Chung Hee and his era, even though more precise examination should be needed in the future.

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*One Alliance, Two Lenses* is an innovative and unique study of the asymmetrical nature of U.S.-Korea relations. Focusing on the period between 1992 and