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Unfinished modernity or another modernity? The South Korean case

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Abstract South Korea has experienced "compressed capitalist development" over the last five decades, characterized by unprecedented levels of industrialization and democratization, with other distinctive features. This development experience causes some scholars to view the country as a site for a new modernity, following the Western prototype. Concerning the underlying nature of emerging modernity in South Korea, however, there have been controversial insights: some scholars argue that the country is now experiencing a Western type of modernity, and others refute this, saying that it has not at all been modernized. This paper investigates the dynamics and contradictions of capitalist development in South Korea from a perspective of vertical modernization. It considers the origins, process, and outcomes of modernization mainly in terms of democracy, economic growth, and welfare. We assume that there are "different sites and forms of modernity" in the world, and that South Korea would be a good candidate to examine for non-Western modernity. Yet it is our contention that the country's modernity has been distorted and unbalanced in the development of society, culture, politics, and economy. Historically, South Korea has progressed through traditional unmodernity, colonial undermodernity, and Western modernity. A clear examination of the country's development experience reveals to no small degree the complex nature of modernity, in that tradition, modernity, and postmodernity coexist in the present time. We conclude that South Korean modernity is an incomplete project still in progress.

Keywords Modernity · Development · Asia · Korea

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Introduction

Korea[1] can be recognized as a rare case, for it has successfully undergone both industrialization and democratization in a significant way unmatched by other developing countries. The country has transformed itself from rural to industrial to an information society at an unprecedented rate, but not without side effects. Korea is now poised to join the ranks of advanced core countries in the international stratification system. Global customers use Korean-made cars and electronic gadgets, including mobile phones, and they are entertained by Korean popular culture dubbed "Korean Wave" (*Hallyu*), represented by songs and dramas. However, they are also left shocked upon hearing of the tragic sinking of the *Sewol* ferry, resulting in the death of several hundred high school students.

The dynamics and complexities of capitalist development in Korea are closely related to its past experiences. At the dawn of foreign imperial encroachment, the sprout of capitalism in Korea had not been sown well enough to bring about autogenous development in this country, and its modern history has thus been plagued by Japanese colonization, American and Soviet occupation, and a civil war leading to the division of the country. After its liberation from Japan in 1945, Korea embarked upon capitalist development characterized by economic and political achievements. However, the remarkable economic growth and structural change were also accompanied by disarticulation and dependency; Korea's economy is highly dependent upon foreign capital, technology, and resources, and there remains much discrepancy between the country's internationalized sector and its traditional sector. It has not consolidated democracy yet; democracy is partially institutionalized, in that there is a low degree of separation of power among the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches.

Concerning the underlying nature of modernity in Korea, there is a variety of conflicting arguments. Western scholarship has looked at Korea, among East Asian countries, as an ideal place for an "emergent modernity" (Tiryakian 1990), leading to a "second modernity" (Berger 1988), following a Western prototype. Unlike Western scholarship, however, Korean scholarship is somewhat critical of the modernity materializing in Korea. Lim (1995) asserts that Korea has not been modernized at all by a Western standard. In line with this assertion, Kim and Jung (1997) claim that modernity is distorted as a result of Western domination and should be replaced by an alternative form of modernity. In recent years, some scholars have maintained that modernity can be deconstructed by a discourse of postmodernity, while others denounce this idea, stating that postmodernity does not consider the positive and negative sides of modernity.[2]

This paper readdresses the underlying nature of modernity in Korea, demonstrating that recognizing the coexistence of tradition, modernity, and postmodernity in time and space is essential to understanding modern Korea. This paper is divided into six parts. Following the introduction, Section 2 unravels a theoretical underpinning of modernity discussed in the Korean context. Section 3 extends the theoretical discussion of the previous section by focusing on the dynamics and contradictions of Korean modernity. Section 4 explores the major features of Korea's capitalist development in the context of "vertical modernization," closely examining Korea's experience in industrialization and democratization. Section 5 attempts to locate the Korean experience of capitalist development in the context

[1] Hereafter Korea refers to South Korea unless otherwise noted.

[2] See Wagner (2012), Chap. 3.

of "quasi-modernity." In the concluding section, we summarize our findings and raise unanswered questions for future research.

Explaining the relationship among tradition, modernity, and postmodernity

On a historical timeline, humankind has passed from tradition (agricultural society) through modernity (industrial society) to postmodernity (information- and knowledge-based society). One must admit, however, that this is nothing but an ideal or a typically defined matter of time passing. Although advanced capitalist countries might have moved through this progression, they at present face a mixture of tradition, modernity, and postmodernity. In particular, in most developing countries tradition still shapes modernity, and postmodernity takes place, partially amid conflicts between tradition and modernity.

Early modernization theories assumed that there existed tension and discord between tradition and modernity in any given developing country. It was found by later modernization theories, however, that in many developing countries, tradition constrains or facilitates the making of modernity. Modernization can thus be seen as a multilinear process in which a varying mixture of tradition and modernity is involved depending on a country's specific sociohistorical condition. Moore's seminal work on comparative modernization in France, England, Germany, Japan, Russia, and China has convincingly shown that there are capitalist, fascist, and socialist paths to the modern world (Moore 1968).

On postmodernity, there is no coherent, unified theory.[3] Postmodernist theories presume that postmodernity is an antithesis to modernity; modernity seeks grand narrative concerned with nation, state, and class, while postmodernity embraces small narrative engaged in issues of gender, generation, and ethnicity. Postmodernist theories envisage modernity as an outgrowth of the Enlightenment that suppressed the individual and caused humankind to deviate from the original ideal of liberation. Paradoxically, modernity is associated with the crisis of reason and freedom in the modern age.[4]

The single most important merit of postmodernist theories lies in their potential ability to relativize all modernist theories as grand narratives. As far as development theories are concerned, modernization theory and dependency theory[5] are grand narratives, even though they move away from each other in terms of ideological orientation and mode of explanation. Indeed, they provide diametrically opposed diagnoses of underdevelopment and prescriptions for development, which can fall into a general scheme of either capitalism or socialism. Postmodernist theories can contribute to deconstructing the myth and reality of capitalist or socialist development in the (former) Third World countries.[6] For

[3] Postmodernism can be initially observed in a wide range of fields such as art, architecture, literature, film, philosophy, cultural theory, social theory, and more. In this regard, Callinicos (1990, p. 2) points out that "the producers of this discourse… offered definitions which were mutually inconsistent, internally contradictory and/or hopelessly vague."

[4] Following this line of thought, one sociologist titled his book *The Dark Side of Modernity* (Alexander 2013).

[5] We differentiated modernization theory and dependency theory as two competing paradigms in the study of (former) Third World development, in that the former includes sociological modernization theory, neoclassical economic theory, and political development theory, and the latter embraces Latin American theory of dependencia, world-system theory, and theory of peripheral capitalism.

[6] Some of the good works in this line of post-development thinking are Sachs (1992), Schurman (1993), Escobar (1995), Rahnema and Bawtree (1997), and Munck and O'Hearn (1999).

these nations, development should be considered as "heterogeneous, contested, impure [and] hybrid" (Escobar 2000, p. 12).

Nonetheless, there are certain weaknesses in postmodernist theories. One flaw is the fact that they presuppose a break between modernity and postmodernity. By denying the stark fact that postmodernity follows from modernity, they do not sufficiently take into consideration continuity between modernity and postmodernity. Postmodernity theories also tend to overemphasize the structural problems of modernity and underestimate its material and cultural achievements. It is hard to concur that postmodernity can emerge in the absence of modernity.

Based on the discussion above, this paper agrees with the conceptualization of modernity as a historical social formation (Wagner 2001, 2012, especially chap. 2). This conceptualization leads us to argue that "there have been a number of different sites and forms of modernity" in the world (Robertson and Khondker 1998, p. 31).[7] The idea of multiple modernities is predicated upon three interrelated assumptions: tradition as an active agent in defining the modernization process, the relevance of non-Western civilizations for the understanding of Western modernity, and the global significance of local knowledge (Tu 2000, p. 19). It opens up the possibility of grappling with the formation, change, disintegration, and reformation of various Western and non-Western modernities from a comparative perspective.

According to Eisenstadt (2001), modernity is a distinct civilization. Although modernity first crystallized in Western Europe, other non-Western countries have developed a multitude of modernities following the Western prototype of modernity. The history of modernity can be seen as a process of the constitution and reconstitution of various cultural and institutional programs of modernity. Eisenstadt also comments that institutional and cultural contours of modernity are subject to continuous change, due to a combination of factors: the internal dynamics of the technological, economic, political, and cultural arenas; the political struggles and confrontations between different regions, states, and locales; the shifting hegemony in the international system; the conflicts between the elites and masses; and the like (Eisenstadt 2001, pp. 331–332).

So far, mainstream Western scholarship has supposed that modernity is a Western project (cf. Giddens 1990). Even though Giddens rejects the basic idea of postmodernity as the ending point of history, his notion of "radicalized modernity" in a continuum between simple modernity and high modernity is drawn entirely from Western European and North American development experiences. It is true that modernity first appeared in Western Europe and spread to other parts of Europe, and then to North America, and later on to Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The spread of modernity has followed contradictory processes throughout the world: in some cases Western modernity has emerged as a new form of modernity combined with tradition, while in other cases Western modernity has destroyed native traditions for the benefit of a new modernity. Even in Western Europe, modernity at the outset developed into "restricted liberal modernity" as a form of bourgeois utopia, and currently has not yet reached the stage of "extended liberal modernity" that enables the full inclusion of all members of society (Wagner 1994). The former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries also provided "socialist modernity" as an alternative to "capitalist modernity." Furthermore, we can witness a range of variations in capitalist modernity across the world: Anglo-Saxon, Rhenish, Swedish, Japanese, or Singaporean versions of capitalist modernity.

[7] For a detailed discussion of this, please refer to Robertson (1995), Therborn (1995), and articles appearing in Featherstone, Lash and Robertson (1995).

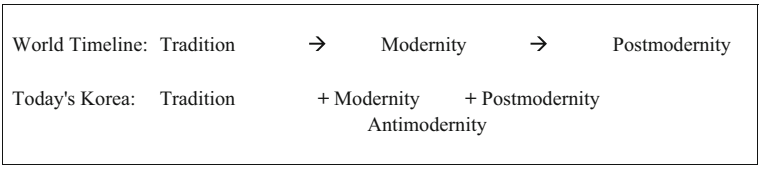

Fig. 1 Korea in world timeline

Dynamics of Korean modernity

When we consider the case of Korea, we witness another variant of modernity. Korea exhibits a case showing that not only tradition and postmodernity but also modernity and antimodernity can coexist in the time zone of the present: traditional beliefs and symbols interact with modern, foreign institutions and cultures; capitalist modernity is challenged by socialist or other forms of anticapitalist modernity; and postmodern trends and phenomena live together with traditional or modern values and practices. Figure 1 illustrates Korea's position in the world timeline.

One of the difficulties we face in investigating the underlying nature of modernity in Korea comes from the fact that current main discourse on modern, modernity, or modernization originated from a unique historical experience of Western European development. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Western Europe underwent far-reaching societal changes that culminated in the modernization of economy, politics, society, and culture. This modernization process of Western Europe entailed a large-scale capitalist expansion to the hinterland of the world in the forms of imperialism and colonialism. The development of Western Europe was accompanied by the underdevelopment of the rest of the world, including Korea. It is in this world-historical context that the world as a whole has entered an era of what we usually call modernity. After all, modernity consists of a set of standards generalized from Western European development experience that are not extant in Korea (Lim 1995, pp. 190–193).[8]

In order to overcome this Eurocentric bias of social science to explain a Korean case, we utilized a postcolonial discourse in an attempt to reformulate a system of knowledge produced in Western Europe and North America (Pieterse and Barekh 1995).[9] Postcolonial discourse could be emancipating in that it can criticize the ideas and practices of the existing concept of modernity as a Western construct. We hope to reconstruct the concept of modernity so that it may be analyzed to its full depth and breadth across time and space in the world.

In Korea, as already mentioned, we can detect a coexistence of tradition, modernity, antimodernity, and postmodernity. Out of these, then, which kind of modernity prevails in Korea? In order to answer this question, we need to conceptualize some subtypes of modernity. For the sake of brevity, we analytically define three types of modernity: *unmodernity, undermodernity,* and *modernity*.[10] In traditional Korea, modernity was in the form of unmodernity, since modernity did not blossom in its native environment.

[8] Kim (2015) overviews the timeline of East Asian modernity, including Korea.

[9] From a postcolonial discourse, Cho Han (1994) has pioneered the criticism of the academic dependence of Korean social sciences embedded in Orientalism.

[10] We would like to add two dimensions of modernity: *eumodernity* as a possibility and *dysmodernity* as a limitation.

Colonial Korea experienced a form of undermodernity, in that indigenous modernity was negated and deformed by Japanese imperialism.[11] During that time, modernity in Korea was initiated and imposed by imperial Japanese occupiers. The subjugated Korean people were forced to abandon or despise their own culture and tradition of several thousand years; Korea's own culture was considered inferior to a Western one.

The first modern state experienced by Korean people under the rule of Japan has resulted in enduring effects. A state that was repressive and insensitive to the needs of the people in the territory was the essence of the experience. The state led by Japanese bureaucrats and some Korean collaborators acted independently from the people; the state set up agendas without taking into consideration the existing traditions of Korea. For example, new cities and railways were built to connect Japan to Manchuria via the Korean peninsula, ignoring traditional transportation systems, which resulted in the decay of traditional cities.

A strong state resulted in a weak civil society. Even though Japanese rule dismantled a large portion of traditional Korean life, Japan's colonial rule did not eliminate traditional power elites. Japanese rulers preserved remnants of Korea's traditional dominant class, termed *Yangban*, by guaranteeing their traditional landlord status. Even though some resisted Japanese colonial rule, some in the Korean literati class collaborated to conserve their power. As a consequence, the old ruling Confucian class of Korea and related traditional elements of Korean culture, such as paternalism, were preserved.

This legacy of first encounter with modernity imposed by a strong, independent state has survived even after independence in 1945.[12] The capitalist South Korean state facing threat from communist North Korea successfully justified its near absolute power. The Korean War in 1950 consolidated the power of the state over civil society. In addition, the survival of Japanese collaborators after liberation had a negative influence on the growth of civil society. By building an alliance with the United States, by presenting themselves as anticommunist leaders, the collaborators with Japan during Japanese rule held on to every opportunity to keep their power in South Korea. The presence of a strong state paired with lack of independent civil leaders pressed civil society to stay at a dormant stage for more than 20 years.[13]

The growth of civil society in Korea had been repressed under the guise of anticommunism. The realization of democracy based on civil society has been deferred under this situation. The government heralded that democracy and human rights should be limited for the sake of growth—"Growth First, Democracy Later" was its slogan. The labor union continued to be under the strong control of a heavy-handed government. From the inception of the labor union after the liberation, labor leaders were under the influence of the government. Military coup leaders of 1960 disbanded the national labor union and reorganized it with the leaders they appointed. The state changed the form of the union:

[11] Colonial undermodernity might have more advantages than colonial modernity, since it can capture not only limitations of colonial industrialization motivated by Japanese war efforts, but also wrongdoings of Japanese policies in enforcing cultural and social assimilation in Korea. In a sense, colonial modernity is a contradictory terminology. Concerning colonial modernity, see Shin and Robinson (1999).

[12] Alavi (1972, pp. 59–60) reported that postcolonial societies developed a unique system with an autonomous role of the state apparatus differing from European societies.

[13] This state, ironically, became an important foundation of economic success as a result of [IS THIS WHAT WAS MEANT?] its attempt to develop the economy (Evans 1995). Korean bureaucrats established economic development plans and successfully implemented them to generate economic success. Bureaucrats were embedded in business and compelled business leaders to devote themselves to economic development. All resources were directed toward development, with strict guidance from the state apparatus.

from an industrial union system to a company union system in 1980. As a consequence, to this day, workers are fragmented and divided by seeking their own interest as members of a particular company. In a sense, the lack of solidarity among workers originated from the strong state, which can be traced back to the start of modernization under Japanese rule.

Considering the historical legacy, Korean modernity of today should be a variant of Western modernity, with a combination of *dysmodernity* on the negative line of the spectrum and *eumodernity* on the positive side. It is our contention that it is too simple to approach it as a dichotomy of tradition and modernity to explain the complex process of the constitution and reconstitution of modernity in Korea. By undoing the exclusive binarism of tradition and modernity or of modernity and postmodernity, a better understanding of the underlying nature of modernity in Korea—having gone through traditional unmodernity, colonial undermodernity, and Western dysmodernity and eumodernity—can be reached. This will allow us to deconstruct recent Korean modernity and search for alternatives to Western modernity.

There are two recent cases that will help comprehend the intricate characteristics of Korean modernity: the smash hit "Gangnam Style," which represents the brighter side of modernity, and the tragic sinking of the *Sewol* ferry with a death toll of 294 passengers, revealing the darker side. The music video of the song "Gangnam Style" has been YouTube's most watched video since November 24, 2012, and obligated YouTube to update its software to handle increasingly large numbers of viewers.[14]

Psy's hugely popular song is a worthy offspring of Korean modernity. Psy was born into an affluent family in Korea, hence raised in a good neighborhood. His father attended elite schools in Korea, and this education secured him lucrative jobs, ensuring him continued wealth. Most of Psy's father's generation could not have even imagined studying abroad due to the prevalence of poverty in Korea; however, the relative wealth of his family gave Psy the opportunity to study at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he was influenced by the music and performance strategies of Freddie Mercury of Queen and other rock bands. Buoyed by economic success in Korea, many Korean students had the chance to study abroad after the 1990s by paying expensive tuition and living costs overseas, and Psy was one of them.

During the early days, Pys's performance in the music video for "Gangnam Style" created controversy due to the nature of the song, which was considered too provocative in Korea; however, his continued effort backed by his education at a prestigious American music college helped him overcome those initial problems. Another factor that contributed to his survival in Korea was the fast cultural assimilation within Korean culture of American culture; Korean society could not have put up with his "vulgar" performance just 30 years ago, but modernity in Korea had taken over quickly to accommodate Psy on a cultural aspect.

The sinking of the *Sewol* ferry is a dark side to the face of Korean modernity. This is because the root of the tragedy is closely related to the success of Korean modernity. Korea chose many shortcuts to achieve economic success, taking many risks since the 1960s.[15] *Sewol* was the name of the passenger cargo ship that traveled between Incheon, a major port city in the vicinity of Korea's capital city, Seoul, and Jeju Island, the most popular vacation spot in Korea, and it was also used to transport essential goods needed on the island. The ferry, which could carry 921 passengers, 130 cars, and 60 5-ton trucks, was almost 20 years old when imported from Japan. Initially, the outdated ship was unable to

[14] See *The New York Times*, June 9, 2014.

[15] The characteristics of this development are discussed further in Sect. 3.

be imported until the previous administration made the policy change as a stimulus package for the economy despite warnings by the maritime office about the instability of RORO-type ships like *Sewol* ferry. The Korean government and the ferry company had taken this risk for yet another economic gain. To make matters worse, the vessel was illegally modified in order to increase profit by having the ship take on more weight than it was able to take. Without proper inspections and enforcement of regulations, the ship was exposed to dangerous levels of risk that could cause irreversible damage. In addition, the crews were not properly trained for emergency situations and the public office neglected inspections regarding vessel safety and the crew's safety training. To make matters worse, the Korean Coast Guard, the final safety net, was also not adequately equipped and trained to rescue the passengers. The ferry company violated laws and took risks to make more profit. Bureaucrats shared a cozy relationship with business partners and neglected their obligation to serve and protect the people.

These two cases testify that modernity may have the two faces of Janus, the bright and the dark side (Alexander 2013). Korea's successes and failures are closely interconnected; as Korea becomes more modern, there will also arise more problems such as mass-scale disasters, deepening inequality, and widespread social unrest.

Major features of capitalist development

Korean modernity began with the unexpected meeting with Western modernity as discussed earlier in this paper. Forced and passive modernity changed after liberation in 1945; however, the colonial experience endured and influenced Korea's attempt to achieve modernity; therefore, its trajectory toward modernity has been different from that of other societies. The driving force of the modernization that came from the state led by elites and the all-out attempt to achieve development in a short time have shaped the characteristics of Korean modernity.

The limits of vertical modernization

In order to examine the similarity and dissimilarity of the process and outcome of development, the characteristics of conditions before development should be examined from a comparative perspective. The concepts of vertical and horizontal modernization are useful to show the contrasting characteristics of the periods before and after the start of development in Korea (Lim 2001, p. 79).

The driving force of horizontal modernization tends to come from the bottom, the people, whereas the driving force of vertical modernization tends to come from the top, the elites. In the former situation, as the subjugated bourgeoisie is formed, the laissez faire state appears and civil liberties are expanded. Through representative democracy, class-compromising capitalism is developed. In the latter form, under the protection of the interventionist state there exists a cooperative bourgeoisie dependent on the state, with denied civil liberties. In this process, some classes, most notably the working class, are excluded from the policy-making process. Generally, the process of horizontal modernization occurs relatively free from the world system, and countries with horizontal modernization have experienced endogenous development; however, the process of vertical modernization is generally bound and dependent on the world system and shows exogenous development. Most countries that sought vertical modernization had experienced a period of colonialization (Lim 2001, pp. 78–80).

The role of the state in modernization is evident in late development, and coercion of civil society to achieve consensus for resource mobilization to aid development is pervasive. These late developers stress the importance of developmental values such as growth, efficiency, and government control, over the values of equality, equity, and autonomy of civil society. As a consequence, vertical development can penetrate into society; however, it lacks the ability to make a social integration.

The path to and results of development depend on how late-developing countries, vying to catch up with early developers, attempt to develop themselves using late-development effects under the constraints of the world system. The later-developing countries could take advantage of the prior gained experience and technology of the advanced developing countries in knowledge, technology, and institutions for development; they can also minimize errors in every field of development, such as planning, education, training, mobilization of resources, and investment. As one of these countries, Korea took advantage of being a later developer and succeeded in economic development. Its GNP grew from 1.3 billion dollars in 1953 to 1304 billion dollars in 2013. GNP per capita also grew from a mere 67 dollars in 1953 to 25,973 dollars in 2013 (see Figs. 2, 3).

The later-developing countries, however, also face many difficulties, such as experiencing pressure and control from advanced countries in market accessibility, international finance, and technology and feeling that they lag far behind the advanced countries. Wallerstein (1991, pp. 115–116) argues that the socialist bloc, not only capitalist countries, has revealed its inability to solve inequality due to the obsessive emphasis on development with the goal of catching up to the advanced developed countries.[16] Not many late-developing countries have succeeded in vertical modernization. Japan, Germany, and the United States are exceptions. Japan utilized the advantages of late development, and Germany and the U.S. did not experience much difficulty from the world system. These three countries were imperials in the era of capitalist expansion, managing their colonies or quasi colonies.

The historical and structural position of Korea indicates that it is almost impossible for Korea to advance to a central position in the world system.[17] Korea achieved its independence in 1945 in the midst of an intensifying Cold War, and then soon experienced division into warring North and South Korea, making it inevitable for Korea to become strongly dependent on the world system. Even though Korea advanced to a semiperipheral position, comparative to the peripheral countries, it still depends on the countries at the core. Therefore, there is a clear limit for Korea to become one of the advanced capitalist countries.

Condensed development: democracy, economic growth, and welfare

Korean development since its liberation from Japanese occupation can be called condensed development.[18] Fast late–late development by vertical modernization has been extremely

[16] Korea could have been an exception until the late 1980s, but since then inequality in Korea has risen considerably, as seen in Table 1.

[17] Liberals and Marxists agree on this assessment. Thurow (1992, p. 204) showed that Japan was the only country to advance to the center between the nineteenth century and the twentieth century. Chase-Dunn (1994, pp. 80–81) considered nine countries, including Japan, Soviet Russia, Finland, Norway, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, and Australia. Other than Japan, Soviet Russia and Finland had already moved into the center during the nineteenth century.

[18] Cho (1994) coined the term "condensed growth" to depict the rapid economic development in Korea since the early 1960s and made the term popular; however, Professor Okawa in Japan had already used a similar term, compressed growth, to summarize Japanese economic development before World War II.

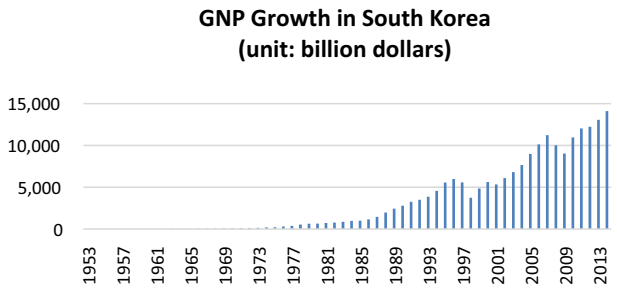

Fig. 2 *Source* Bank of Korea, Economic Statistics System, accessed on October 19, 2014

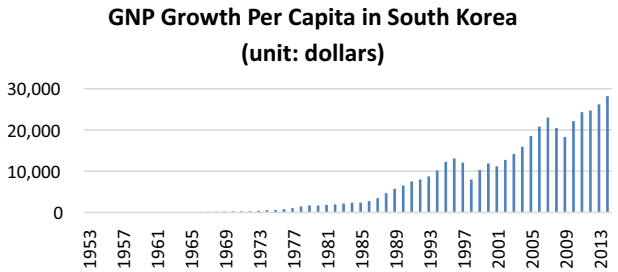

Fig. 3 *Source* Bank of Korea, economic statistics system, accessed on October 19, 2014

Table 1 Change in Gini coefficient in Korea*

Year	Market income (before tax)	Disposable income (after tax)
1990	0.266	0.256
1995	0.259	0.251
2000	0.279	0.266*
2005	0.306	0.287**
2010	0.341	0.310***
2013	0.336	0.302

* For urban households with more than 2 members (from 1990 to 2002)

** For non-rural households with more than 2 members (from 2003 to 2005)

*** For all households

Source The Statistics Korea, e-Narajipyo, Accessed on October 19, 2014

condensed; therefore, it has created a complex, unbalanced, and uneven society. The coexistence of old and new along with the mixture of various domestic and foreign elements are prevalent in Korea: urban with rural, rich with poor, agriculture with industry, old and young generations, and males and females are such examples. The stark differentiation between various fields of society has created strain and conflict among groups. This is the result of development; it creates a contradictory situation of developmental dynamics and conflict. Korea has achieved remarkable economic development, as seen in Figs. 2 and 3; however, this has also created considerable inequality, as the Gini coefficient shows (Table 1).

Table 2 Public welfare expenditure in Korea (unit: *billion won)

Year	1990	2000	2005	2010	2011
Total Expenditure	5398*	29,084	56,297	107,202	112,894
Percentage of GDP					
All	2.82	4.82	6.51	9.14	9.14
Pension for the elderly	0.61	1.25	1.46	2.08	2.1
Survivor's benefit	0.16	0.17	0.23	0.26	0.27
Worker's inability to pay	0.29	0.38	0.54	0.49	0.49
Public health	1.53	2.18	3	4.12	4.08
Family	0.03	0.11	0.26	0.79	0.94
Active labor market programs	0.03	0.38	0.12	0.43	0.37
Unemployment	–	0.08	0.2	0.31	0.29
Misc.	0.18	0.27	0.7	0.67	0.6

* signifies the unit of the number, which is billion won

Source The Statistics Korea, e-Narajipyo, Accessed on October, 19, 2014

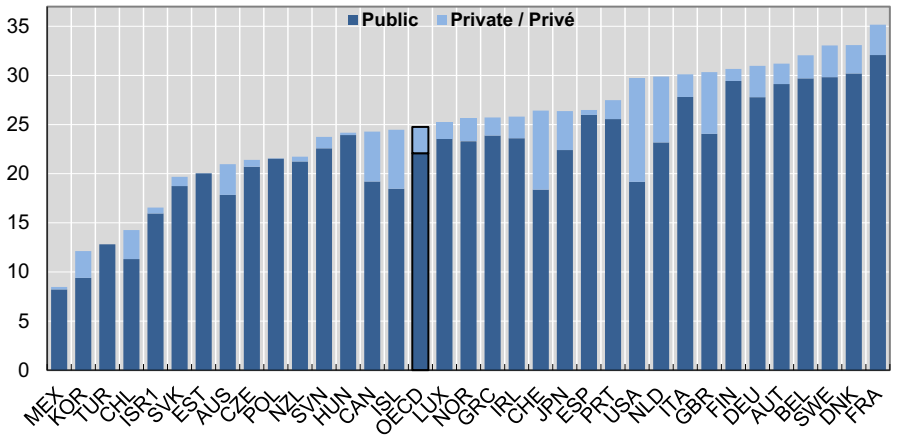

Fig. 4 Public and private social expenditure in percentage of GDP in 2009*. *2008 for Switzerland. *Note* Data for Israel refer to public expenditure only. Information on data for Israel: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602. *Source* OECD Social Expenditure Database (SOCX) via www.oecd.org/social/expenditure.htm

This growth of inequality will certainly create social conflict. One of the conventional ways to deal with this problem is to increase welfare spending; however, the budget is extremely limited, as shown in Table 2. International comparison demonstrates that Korea is lagging behind in welfare spending as well (Fig. 4).

Korea can be defined as displaying a combination of excessive development, distorted development, and lack of development. For example, economic development resulted in shrinking the first sector, overgrowing the third sector, and an enlarged secondary sector. The third-sector growth is heavily indebted not only to the growth in the formal sector but also to growth in the informal sector, which is evident in the prevalence of low-paying jobs. In the secondary sector, technology-intensive industry and labor-intensive industry

Table 3 Production structure (%)*

Year	Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	Manufacturing**	Electricity, gas, and water supply	Construction	Services
1975	29.1	18.5	1.3	5.1	44.3
1980	16.0	24.6	2.1	7.9	48.0
1985	13.3	26.7	2.9	6.9	49.0
1990	8.7	26.6	2.1	10.4	51.5
1995	6.2	26.7	2.0	10.1	54.6
2000	4.6	28.3	2.5	6.9	57.3
2005	3.3	27.5	2.3	7.6	59.0
2010	2.6	30.3	2.0	6.3	58.5
2013	2.6	31.1	2.1	5.8	58.2

* Reference year: 2005

** Mining, quarrying excluded

Source Bank of Korea, Economic Statistics System, Accessed on October 21, 2014

display huge discrepancies in profits, wages, working conditions, and more. Some subsectors in manufacturing also show worsening conditions, whereas other subsectors have appeared to catch up with those in advanced nations (Table 3).

This situation results in a contradictory condition; quantitative growth does not equate to improved quality of life in Korea. Rapid economic development with lagging democratic consolidation[19] and implementation of a welfare state is the situation in current Korea. Seemingly conflicting organizational principles are intermingled: coexistence of collectivism and individualism, authoritarianism and calls for democracy, ritualism and pragmatism, and emotivism and rationalism. Often this creates negative consequences such as collective egotism, mammonism, and immoral behavior. This necessitates recursive development; problems created by the condensed development may be overturned by vertical modernization. The need for reflection to increase substantive rationality, which Korea lacks in comparison to instrumental rationality, cannot be overemphasized.

Past Korean development was based on a strategy of outward development with a growth-first policy using *chaebol* (Korean conglomerates). An impetus for late–late development was the bureaucrats, who brought in foreign capital and technology and

[19] Korea has stopped increasing political freedom, as shown below.

Freedom, civil liberties, and political rights in Korea

	1998	2005	2010	2013	2014
Freedom rating	2	1	1.5	1.5	2
Civil liberties	2	2	2	2	2
Political rights	2	1	1	1	2

Source Freedom House, http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/south-korea-0#.VEMkNk1xmCg, Accessed on October 19, 2014

funneled those resources into big companies. Small groups of companies and workers affiliated with *chaebol* were the main beneficiaries of monopolized profits from exports. This resource mobilization mechanism based on coercion and repression was bound to encounter a consistent legitimacy crisis; therefore, the mechanism changed to one of consensus, transitioning from an authoritarian political system to a democratic one.

The condensed and rushed Korean development can be labeled as a "juggernaut" (Giddens 1990, p. 139). In the process, old and new values collide with each other, resulting in anomie; speed and achievement are more important values than safety and procedure. Korea's fast capitalist industrialization is a close manifestation of a risk society. The causes of the Korean economic crisis in 1997 were related to the factors that contributed to the fast economic development—rushing to development without hesitation resulted in economic success at first, and then catastrophic failure. Without considering long-term effects, Korea took up any opportunity that might contribute to development, such as financial liberalization, a flexible labor market, and building massive nuclear power plants. Financial liberalization without a proper monitoring system has been considered a major cause of the 1997 financial crisis. Labor market reform created massive numbers of temporary workers, threatening social stability and long-term labor market performance. Scandals over building and maintaining 23 nuclear power plants continue to raise questions as to whether Korea has the ability to use nuclear power without terminating itself. The current situation testifies that the transition to an industrial society in Korea lacks a self-regulating mechanism; crisis in development shows that future of Korea is unpredictable and very risky. A more perilous financial meltdown could occur, severe social unrest could erupt, and deadly accidents in nuclear power plants could take place anytime. The first step to cope with a risk society should be to question the overconfidence in modern civilization and science. The causes of accident and disaster are not only physical and natural, but also social and political. Therefore, the answer to the current developmental crisis should be found in the dismantlement and reorganizing of the concept of development. The concept of development was the idea of the West, containing its experience in a specific period, and the East imported it. Contrary to the experience in the West, the development history in the East is strewn with devastation of nature and society. This experience demands that Korea find a way to harmonize the relationship between nature and humankind, to find an ideal for value-driven development.

Korean experience as an emerging modernity: a "quasi-modernity"

Korea has experienced a radical and drastic societal change over the past five decades. The country has undergone an unprecedented rate of modernization within the span of 60 years, a process Western European countries went through over the course of about two centuries. Accordingly, the modernization process in the areas of economy, politics, society, and culture has been so abrupt that we can characterize it as "condensed capitalist development."

In the Habermasian sense, modernization in Korea can be defined as what Habermas has termed an "unfinished project." The country has failed to build up a unified nation-state that can provide the necessary conditions for launching independent industrialization and total democratization. The national economy is heavily dependent upon foreign capital, technology, and resources because of its functional incompleteness due to the division of the country. Despite the inauguration of four civilian governments with party alternation,

democratic institutions and norms are not rooted strongly enough to bring about governmental accountability and people's representativeness. In terms of dependent industrialization and partial democratization, Korea has developed a unique type of modernity that embraces both the possibility and the limitation of capitalist development. This can well be exemplified by Korea's unfinished modernization: dependent on capital accumulation, a rent-seeking market economy, formal democratic procedures, and an immature civil society, among other factors.

It is tempting to say that Korean modernity is not "fake-modernity" per se but closer to "quasi-modernity" (Lim 2001, pp. 88–90). The economic and political achievements can hardly be denied, but should be properly weighed against the limitations. Although on the surface Korea looks modern, in actuality, it is far from being modernized. We can make a couple of points here regarding the underlying nature of modernity in Korea over the past 50 years.

First, Korean modernity is not evenly distributed in the areas of economy, politics, society, and culture, as discussed in the previous section. The economy, politics, society, and culture have differentiated from one another in an unequal and unbalanced way. The societal differentiation has not increased the relative autonomy of the economy, politics, society, and culture. This has resulted in tension and cleavage among economy, politics, society, and culture. In fact, industrialization has taken precedence over democratization—resulting in a gap between democratic ideals and development politics. Social and political tension can be felt among members of society over the values of freedom, growth, distribution, and the environment. Regional, generational, and class cleavage is also a manifestation of uneven modernization.

Second, Korean modernity is multilayered, in that traditional, modern, and postmodern parameters stand together. The development of the economy, politics, society, and culture has been a process of intermixture among these different attributes. Even in individual areas of the economy, politics, society, and culture, these different attributes are mixed up, producing disharmonies and clashes. For instance, authoritarianism and egalitarianism, connectionism and universalism, formalism and pragmatism, and collectivism and individualism all exist as pairs that cannot be separated in the behavior of Korean citizens. Figuratively speaking, an average Korean can be said to have a "Western crust but a Confucian core."

Now we would like to reflect on the underlying nature of modernity in Korea. Korean modernity is a complex mixture of different kinds of modernities. It is composed of heterogeneous and competing cultural and institutional elements of traditional unmodernity, colonial undermodernity, and Western modernity. There can be found the so-called "synchronic existence of dissynchronics." In essence, the dominant form of Korean modernity has been framed by Western modernity, with a variety of Chinese Confucian, Japanese, American, and European elements, which are intermingled in such a way as to undermine the self-identity of Korean modernity. This might be a natural result of the exogenous modernization experienced by Korea. Globalization is likely to have further effects on the weakening of the self-identity of Korean modernity.

Summary and discussion

This paper has tried to present a crude but broad picture of modernity in Korea. Diachronically, Korea has undergone traditional unmodernity, colonial undermodernity, and Western modernity in the process of modernization. There have been continuities as

well as changes among these forms. The dominant form of Korean modernity has been framed by Western modernity. It should be emphasized, however, that the self-identity of Korean modernity is weak, mainly because Korean modernity is a mixture of heterogeneous and conflicting institutional and cultural programs, with native Korean, Chinese Confucian, Japanese, American, and European elements.

Modernity can be perceived as a multiple civilizational project. As a specific historical social formation, Korean modernity has changed over time, with a continuous constitution and reconstitution of its cultural and institutional contours. In order to thoroughly grasp the underlying nature of modernity in Korea, we observed the historical development of tradition, modernity, and postmodernity, which have interacted with one another in the process of capitalist development. After this process had been understood, we could reflect upon how they have helped shape unique configurations of modernity in Korea.

There are, however, more unanswered than answered questions. Among other inquiries, we still cannot locate the relative place of Korean modernity among Western and non-Western modernities. At this juncture, we would like to suggest three areas of future research that are interrelated: a comparative study of variations in Western modernity, a case study of East Asian modernity, and an in-depth study of continuities and changes in Korean modernity.

As a Korean saying goes, "The most local is the most global." This saying can be interpreted as meaning universality cannot exist without particularity and vice versa. It is instructive to argue that there is something universal more than particular inherent in Korean modernity from a multiple modernities perspective. We would like to conclude our discussion by challenging future scholars to attempt to comprehend Western tradition and modernity from the viewpoint of Korean tradition, and at the same time to try to apprehend Korean tradition and modernity from the perspective of Western modernity.

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