

The Development of Modern South Korea

**State formation, capitalist
development
and national identity**

Kyong Ju Kim



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The Development of Modern South Korea

The Development of Modern South Korea provides a comprehensive analysis of South Korean modernization. Examining South Korea's state formation, capitalist development and evolving national identity in a broader civilizational framework, Kyong Ju Kim challenges the conventional modernization and cultural theories, and argues that Korea's modernization is not simply an instance of universal dynamics and values working, nor an isolated development experience driven solely by its own cultural values and institutional conditions. Rather, Korean modernity has been shaped by its historical and cultural traditions, the interaction with East Asian civilizational forces, and the modern world political economy.

Taking this civilizational approach, the book succeeds in bridging the gap between western theory and local Korean practices by establishing the relation of Korean modernity to other modernization experiences, and thus bringing a more sophisticated view on the subject of multiple modernities. *The Development of Modern South Korea* will be essential reading for scholars of Korean politics, society and history as well as those studying anthropology, sociology and economics.

Kyong Ju Kim has been a research fellow at La Trobe University, National University of Singapore and Seoul National University, and a teaching fellow and visiting lecturer at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

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For my mother, Jin Jae Im

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Preface

Many people will remember South Korean soccer fans, in their uniformed red shirts, chanting ‘Daehanminguk,’ or ‘Republic of Korea,’ for the Korean team in the 2002 FIFA World Cup games. They impressed the world with their striking sense of national solidarity and civic awareness in such an event. As I was close to finishing this book, a scandal broke out over a cloning scientist Professor Hwang Woo-Suk, who has reportedly fabricated data for his widely praised work on stem cells. The scandal shook the Korean people who took national pride personally. This high-profile scandal not only caused disappointment and anger among the Koreans, but also brought about an opportunity for us to reflect critically on what I call the ‘Korean modernity’: its historical background, evolutionary path and contemporary configuration; and why Korean society is what it is today. In the half-century long, compressed and drastic process of seeking national identity, sovereignty and modern economic and political life, the Korean people developed a unique national character that has become a defining element of the Korean modernity.

This book is such a reflection. It is an interpretation of the South Korean path to and through modernity. It aims to understand the distinctive patterns of South Korea’s experience of modernity in relation to its cultural and institutional traditions. Modernity as a continuing project or process is a contested field for critical self-reflection and creative self-transformation of society. The imaginary significations of South Korean modernity have been and continue to be instituted through a new cultural and historical interpretation. Drawing on a civilizational approach, I argue that individual and collective actors have used interpretative resources for an alternative modernizing strategy. I seek to examine the configurations of Korean modernization through a multidimensional approach that emphasizes distinctive historical conditions and cultural values. South Korean modernization is understood in a particular relationship between premodern Korean civilization and the processes of state formation, capitalist development and national integration.

The relationship between the state and civil society, and the changing form of the developmentalist state in South Korea, involve particular versions of modernity and concomitant structures of social power. This book demonstrates this through an investigation of state formation as a key modern project; economic

modernization as an essential trajectory of nation building; and national reunification as a radical project of nation-state formation. I argue that while nationalism plays a decisive role in the whole processes of state formation and modernization, civilizational features provide for a better understanding of the multifaceted character of South Korean society and modernization over the *longue durée*.

This book is not only an intellectual reflection, but also a personal one, given my own personal experience of the transformation of the Korean state, Korean society and the Korean nation over the past several decades and the day-to-day life of the Korean people, and the fact I am a Korean myself. Such a personal experience, while not compromising the intellectual reasoning upon which this book is surely based, led me to become interested in the whole subject in the first place, and served as an important point of reference for the project throughout.

I am indebted to numerous people, many more than I can mention here. First and foremost, I would like to thank Johann Arnason, without whose comments and encouragement this work would hardly have taken shape. He has read the entire draft several times and given invaluable comments on all the chapters. I have benefited greatly from Trevor Hogan, Yoshio Sugimoto, Joel Kahn and Evie Katz, for their constructive comments and helpful suggestions as well as personal support.

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Finally, I want to thank my husband and intellectual soul-mate, Xiaoming Huang. Without him, the project would not have got to this final book form. His ideas and views shaped many aspects of this book. He made it possible for me to work on the book in the evenings while our newborn baby went to sleep.

Kyong Ju Kim
January 24, 2006

Introduction

This book examines South Korea's path to modernity. It aims to illuminate what is unique about the South Korean experience of modernization, paying particular attention to the impact of pre-modern Korean conditions and cultural values on the contemporary configuration of South Korean modernity. In this respect, it takes issue with many analyses that equate South Korean modernization with 'Westernization.' I will argue that the South Korean experience is not adequately understood by universalist conceptions of modernization modeled on the historical development of Western Europe. Such unilineal evolutionary perspectives interpret diverse historical developments through the homogenizing lens of a standardized European model, and thus, whether in a Liberal or Marxist guise, obscure what they are supposed to explain. This is not to suggest that Western European modernization is irrelevant to the study of modernization elsewhere, or social theories developed to explain the Western European experience are inadmissible in other contexts. Rather, it means that the application of such theories must be sensitive to the distinctive historical conditions and contexts within which modernization processes take shape.

The notions of modernity and modernization are problematic but remain valuable theoretical tools to explain social tendencies, including the ongoing socioeconomic and political transition and its social implications. Modernity often refers to a unique form of social life, a constellation of historical processes, and institutions of societies (Hall *et al.* 1992: 2–3). A modern set of institutions has been derived from the imaginary signification of modernity, i.e. the modern imaginary of autonomy and mastery. Economic growth and technological development entail the development of more Western forms of cultural modernity that may erode traditional cultural patterns. Conjoining these processes of liberalization and economic development may elicit the formation of more democratized and pluralistic regimes and a transformation of the relationship between social structures and social agents. This process needs to be explained with respect to particular visions of modernity in the different socio-historic situations.

In this book, South Korean modernization is understood as involving a particular relationship between the pre-modern Korean civilization on the one hand, and the processes of modern state formation, capitalist development and nationalism on the other. Each of these four dimensions of Korea's path to and through

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modernity is discussed in turn. In this framework, modernization is seen as a phase of the overall evolution of a civilization. It is hoped that the recognition of these interpenetrating dimensions of modernity might pave the way for a more complete account of Korea's arguably unique modernization process.

Part I of the book outlines the civilizational and historical background of Korean modernization, discussing its differences from Western models of modernity. Korea has been an identifiable unitary political and civilizational entity for over two thousand years despite numerous and continuous invasions (about 900 in total) and colonization. Although Korea's position was repeatedly compromised by its proximity to powerful neighbors (China and Japan), it has managed to consolidate a distinctive variant of the Chinese civilizational complex.¹ This civilizational complex is an important constituent in South Korean modernization and remains so today. It finds its contemporary expression not only in the cultural sphere, but also in the state structure itself, and in the relationship between the state, civil society and the modern economy.

A civilizational approach to the study of Korean historical development offers a particularly useful framework. It introduces a hermeneutical dimension of culture into discussion of theories of modernization. It enables us to investigate the plural modes of modernization, in particular the processes through which different aspects of modernity have merged with non-European civilizational features as part of the global experience of modernity. The organizational principles of social institutions and the contemporary value systems in a society become operative only through continuous processes of (re)interpretation and (re)construction of cultural traditions. Both structure and agency are implicated, with the former constraining the latter, and with the latter expressing but also at times subverting and transforming the former. Hence modernization can be seen as a process of continuous transformation. The features of modern Korean society are the outcome of self-reflexive and systemic interaction between Korea's civilizational features and the forces of modernization. Chapters 1 and 2 explore the background of Korea's modernity in the civilizational context. Chapter 1 briefly discusses civilizational theories and features of Korean civilization, and Chapter 2 looks at two Korean religions – Shamanism and Confucianism – as significant cultural traditions.

Part II traces the process of state formation and modernization in post-war South Korea against the background of earlier efforts at modernization and provides a critique of existing theories of modern state building. The development of a modern Korean nation-state began in the nineteenth century with significant social, economic and political changes. However, Korea's relatively autonomous development was first challenged by the rivalry between China, Russia and Japan, and then totally disrupted by Japanese colonial annexation in 1910. The ensuing 35 years of brutal colonial rule was in no small way responsible for the establishment and growth of Korean nationalism.

After the Second World War, Korean state formation was significantly shaped by foreign intervention, especially in the context of the Korean War and the subsequent division of the country. Following the partition, Korean modernization,

in both the south and the north, was initiated as a conscious political project designed to achieve national legitimacy through rapid economic development. These socio-political and historical conditions reinforced Korea's integration with the two opposing global power blocs led by the USA and the USSR. In the South Korean case, integration meant dependent capitalist development supported by the USA and Japan. In the north, a relatively effective version of the Soviet model was initially implemented.

The historical events and processes underlying the modern Korean state are analyzed in Chapter 3 primarily through Norbert Elias' (1982) theoretical insights regarding state formation. Elias places state formation in the context of a long historical 'civilizing process.' Using this framework, I discuss South Korean state formation in terms of a broad trajectory of modernization, which integrates socio-cultural dimensions into the processes of state formation, while at the same time linking post-colonial state formation to civilizational and historical preconditions. I show how state monopoly was achieved through the establishment of state power over taxation and violence. I also consider social control and power relations within South Korean society and demonstrate how the South Korean state manipulated cultural and historical conditions for the purpose of social control and industrialization.

The development of a strong, autonomous state has been accompanied by a growing demand for political democratization. The democratic transformation in the late 1980s is the result of social transformation initiated and at first controlled by the developmentalist state. A more recognizably open civil society emerged both as a result of, and in response to, the state's developmentalist policies. Civic engagement within the context of economic development created a degree of mutual dependence between the state and civil society, thereby facilitating further collective action among citizens. The rise of the middle class eroded the government's ability to rely on old ideological formulas and led it to search for new legitimizing mechanisms. Thus, a compromise between the state and civil society brought about significant changes in the political sphere. The growth of civil society in more complex and diverse forms allowed individuals more political, economic and cultural autonomy. Chapter 4 examines the dynamics of civil society in South Korea in relation to cultural imaginaries.

Part III depicts the historical sociology of South Korean modernization. The essential trajectory of South Korean modernization has centered on economic development. The drive toward economic modernization is directly related to a colonial legacy of a particular kind, the division of the nation resulting from the Cold War, and a lack of popular legitimacy for successive South Korean regimes. Here my critique of modernization theories turns to their indifference to the specific historical, civilizational and political context of South Korean economic modernization. The peculiarity of South Korean economic modernization takes on board a broad range of historical and social factors, including the colonial experience, the civil war, the division of the nation, industrialization and cultural tradition.

Chapter 5 briefly discusses the discourse of earlier colonial modernity, and then examines modernization after the civil war in more detail. As with the

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discussion of state formation, this analysis of South Korean modernization uses an open-ended system with a medium-term historical trajectory. Such a framework enables an investigation of how particular cultural features have been preserved or enhanced within the processes of modernization, while being sensitive to the significant changes that accompanied South Korean modernization.

From the viewpoint of modernization theory, the Korean case is of great intrinsic value, given its local cultural configurations of modernization, and the fact that it did not experience a specifically European colonial domination. Although Korea offers an interesting case against which many assumptions of modernization theories can be tested, the different character of its modernization experience remains under-examined in any systematic fashion. The Korean experience is often overshadowed by the regional experience in East Asia, which is viewed as a more relevant unit of analysis. This leads to the neglect of certain specificities of the Korean case. A simplistic use of 'region' as the unit of analysis tends to distract attention away from the diversity that exists within the region. Existing modernization and development theories capture only parts of the complexity, and thus provide only fragmentary images of Korean modernization.

Wallerstein's world-system theory is of particular interest in Chapter 6 regarding the units and levels of analysis. South Korea, from Wallerstein's perspective, exemplifies a dramatic upward shift from a peripheral to a semi-peripheral country in the world economic system, which can be explained by a particular mode of capital accumulation. This approach provides an antidote to those analyses that restrict their horizons exclusively to national/domestic boundaries. Indeed Korean economic modernization must be carefully located within the development of the capitalist world system. This, however, does not imply automatic adoption of the explanations offered by world-system theory. World-system theory underestimates the determining power of geopolitical factors in a country's upward mobility within the world system. It also overlooks cultural dynamics in economic development, and subordinates cultural and non-economic dimensions of organizations and social agents to economic structures. Attempting to explain different modernizing projects within a single logic of capitalist development, the world-system theory oversimplifies the multidimensional nature of modernity. The limited explanatory power of Wallerstein's framework becomes apparent when we look at the different dynamics of state autonomy in general and of South Korea in particular. The role of the state in South Korea as a principal vehicle and actor in a market-based world system far exceeds the expectations of a world-system model of capitalist accumulation, despite the various qualifications of its proponents.

South Korean modernization since the 1960s can largely be accounted for in terms of the particular role played by the South Korean state, which was not only a direct economic agent (producer of goods and services) but also a powerful regulator of economic life (minimum wages, protectionism, subsidies). My analysis focuses on the interplay between the post-colonial/developmentalist South Korean state and the geopolitical conditions, including the bifurcation of Korea as a result of the Cold War and the regional dynamics of East Asia. The state's strategic

intervention brought about successful economic modernization in South Korea, but this success would have been impossible without the effective management of the state. Chapter 7 discusses the background of financial crisis in 1997/1998 and its aftermath. Emphasis is given to how the state responded to the globalizing economic system with an adjustment in its role from a *developmentalist* state to a *regulative* one.² In addition to the state's interventionist attitude in monetary and fiscal matters, the socio-economic effectiveness of production, fundamental transformations in the economic structure and the external forces affecting the South Korean state's adaptability to globalizing tendencies in the world economic system all deserve special attention in this regard.

The state's role must also be placed in the context of South Korea's cultural landscape and how it relates to other political and economic factors. Cultural processes lie behind South Korea's modern structures and economic growth, not in the sense that they caused those structures and growth, but that they were basic conditions upon which structures and growth rested. Modernization in South Korea is inconceivable without an understanding of how the state utilized cultural and historical legacies to achieve its objectives. The South Korean state was exceptionally adept at utilizing traditionalism as a development strategy. In contrast to the expectations of modernization literature that sees 'tradition' as inimical to 'modern' development, many traditional cultural patterns were successfully adapted in South Korea to support the process of state-led industrialization.³

There are, of course, many other examples that demonstrate the utility of traditionalism in sustaining economic development. What is perhaps unique in the South Korean case is the emergence and strengthening of neofamilism, patrimonialism and regionalism in the process of state-led industrialization. Patrimonialism and neofamilism were products of institutional arrangements that provided a fertile ground for economic development of a particular kind. They were also closely linked to ingrained social and cultural values.

In Part IV, Chapter 8 discusses Korean and South Korean nationalism with reference to the political goals of nation building, and the popular desire for (re)integration. There is an uncertain boundary of analysis in this study – Korea or South Korea? While many conflicting interpretations can be found in the discussion of Korean nationalism, a promising if fragile alternative to this ambiguity appears in a reunification project.

Nationalism and the modernizing ideology it has fostered have been among the main driving forces behind the rapid and dramatic transformations of Korean society. Nationalism in Korea can be viewed from two angles: as a distinctive philosophy or ideology; and as the overall policy and program of the state. While there can be no doubt that nationalism has been an important factor in state formation and developmental policies, it has also had great appeal as a basis for identity formation.

The plurality and rivalry of Korean nationalist paradigms reflect the interpretive conflicts within the nationalist discourse in Japanese colonialism. After the liberation, the subsequent division of the nation enabled the two Korean states to identify with ideologies, economic systems and political institutions.

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While communist North Korea has developed a cohesive and totalizing version of nationalism, capitalist South Korea has successfully made a new nexus between the state and capital.

The force and appeal of nationalism in South Korea can be seen in many ways. From the perspective of the developmental state, for example, nationalist orientations play a motivating, mobilizing and legitimating role in state building and in development strategy. From the viewpoint of civil society, on the other hand, nationalism is important in pushing for autonomy (independence), democracy and reunification. From the perspective of ('hard-core') nationalists, the state is seen as having failed to live up to these nationalistic imperatives. Thus, in a peculiar way, nationalism has been used simultaneously both to enhance state power and cohesion, and to undermine its legitimacy. This ambiguity within South Korean nationalism has contributed to South Korea's overall political predicament. Culturally homogeneous, politically divided and polarized, socially segmented and geopolitically swamped by world powers, South Korea has proceeded in modern state building with an ambivalent sense of national identity.

Chapter 9 considers the issue of reunification. Korean reunification is the goal and desire of many in both the north and the south, and its achievement would herald the most auspicious event to date in the radical modernization project of Korea. The completion of such a project would happen in the context of new challenges posed by globalization. Despite the real and alleged impact of globalization on states' capacities and sovereignty, a new unified Korean state would be central in meeting these challenges. Reunification is a crucial element of Korea's alternative modernity in that it involves a further shift in the self-institutionalization of Korean society as a unique cultural civilization.

This book is a critical reflection on Korean modernization and state formation within a civilizational framework. I wish to put Korea 'back on the map' of the world of an increasingly number of successful experiences of modernization. It is hoped that this attempt to interpret and analyze Korean modernity will be a useful contribution to broadening the debate on 'alternative modernities.'⁴

Part I

Korean civilization and cultural tradition

1 The configuration of Korean civilization

1. A stocktaking of historical sociology of Korean civilization

Korea, once called ‘the hermit kingdom,’ has undergone rapid and often drastic change in the twentieth century. At the core of such change has been the ‘rocky’ road to modernity from the centuries-old tradition. From its turbulent history, Korea’s modernization was forged with the backdrop of colonization, conflicting ideologies, compromised national identity, civil war and poverty. All of these factors have continued to invigorate Koreans’ determination for rapid modernization and economic development and at the same time, have been the sources for much of the tension and conflict in modern Korean society.

To the contemporary observer, South Korea is a complex mixture of startling contrasts: the coexistence of its cosmopolitan, striving in the global order and frantic nationalism; rapid economic development alongside the enduring patriarchal attitude and institutions; democratizing movements and authoritarian cultural traditions; an increasing inter-generational gap; widening disparities between the rich and the poor, and continuing animosity between regions and with the north. Such dual characteristics of Korean society have stemmed not only from particular historical conditions and events, such as Japanese colonialism, Korea’s civil war and the partition of the Korean nation, but also from the cultural, social, political and economic transformation of Korean society. All of this opens up the possibility of competing interpretations of the nature of its modernity and the dynamics of its modernization.

The narratives of the modernization theories of the 1950s and 1960s have dominated the scholarly investigations of South Korean modernity and modernization.

The application of these theories comes with their well-known intellectual pre-percepts, often in a simple dichotomy: modernity versus tradition – a dichotomy that often leads to oversimplifications. Many sociologists take the existing frameworks for granted. They tend to think deductively from the modernization theories to the reality of modern development in South Korea. The Western meta-narratives of modernization have dominated every sphere of social and intellectual life to such an extent that it has often led to equating development with Westernization (Mason *et al.* 1980).

It is often argued that, in Korea's modernization, the 'form' of social structure has been modernized, while the 'content' of traditional legacies remains in contemporary Korea in general, and in its culture in particular (MacDonald 1988). The Korean world view is thought to be based on an infrastructure that was accumulated over many thousands of years, which consolidated along with the Korean mode of subsistence (Hahm 1980: 2). It was subsequently developed into a pattern of world interpretation and has manifested itself in Korean daily life. The cultural background of Korea has thus not completely adjusted to the new Western values and institutions. MacDonald calls this the confrontation between tradition and modernity (1988: 2). While Korean development today seems to move towards the strengthening of the elements of modernity, the pre-modern tradition has worked to deepen as well as to challenge the modern features of Korean society.

Rapid change is another characteristic of modern South Korea. Many people wonder why South Korea took only 25 years to achieve the level of production that Japan took 90 years to reach (Chang 1989a: 237). Furthermore, modern Korean society has shown some quite complicated social, economic and political patterns characteristic of the so-called 'postmodern' tendencies, beginning in the late 1980s. All Koreans have experienced quite dramatic changes in every sector of their daily lives – family, working place, the environment, law and politics. Many Koreans have personally and/or collectively been undergoing an identity crisis.¹

In this context, it is not appropriate to explain the South Korean experience of modernization in terms of standard (Western) modernization theories.² Analysts in various disciplines have long been concerned with the story of development of South Korea from their own points of view. Up until the financial crisis in 1997–8, scholars in general and neoclassical ones in particular formed a cheerful chorus for the 'miracle' the 'South Korean economic model' had produced and believed this was what the rest of the developing world could learn. In the view of some, the so-called Korean economic model is a vindication of the modernization theory. Global markets provide the conditions for export-led economic growth by which South Korea was integrated into world capitalism. Due to the experience of successful industrialization, Korea has been metaphorically described as 'a Tiger Cub Growing' (Moos 1988) and one of the 'Four Little Dragons' in East Asia (Vogel 1991). Neoclassical economists, based on its economic performance, argue that the role of the state must be recognized, even though Korea's late industrialization is attributed, in the final analysis, to the working of market mechanisms. Limited state involvement and 'getting the price right' played a critical role in the rapid industrialization and economic growth (Berger 1986; Hughes 1988; Balassa 1981; Krueger and Ito 1995).

From a critical perspective of this argument, more 'broad-minded' scholars describe a unique pattern of South Korean development in which the role of the state in the economy is not only prevalent but also rational (Amsden 1989; Wade 1990; Deyo 1987; Haggard and Moon 1990). Active state intervention, they argue, brought about export success and upward mobility in the world system. Korea's dramatic economic development is attributable to an export-promotion

strategy led by the state, which developed to upgrade the domestic economy via an explicit, systematic industrial policy.

Many scholars also draw our attention to education and schooling, linking economic growth to a highly educated workforce. While this point may be disputable in a broad historical perspective of education in Korea, *prima facie* it would seem that education has been a very important underpinning of South Korea's economic success (Seth 2002).³ Amsden, for example, emphasizes the state's educational and training policies in connection with traditional social relations. She argues that both factors are main contributors to economic success.⁴

Alternatively, Kyong-Dong Kim, a Korean sociologist, attempts to isolate the 'distinctive' features unique to the Korean experience, in which he includes 'the human element' in social organization (1988). For him, Korea's economic growth is a consequence of the adaptive change of Korean people and society to modernization forces. In his analysis, the so-called rationality of Confucianism is questioned. Instead, some non-rational forces such as tenacity, adaptability and the psychology of *han* are seen to have provided the impetus for economic success.⁵

All these views mentioned above are positive and optimistic, and bring the 'orthodoxy' frameworks into the interpretation of modern development in South Korea. Such positive views, however, do not explain the price paid for modernization and economic growth. They fail to fully recognize the full range of effects and consequences of modernization. The one-sided emphasis on economic development leaves gaps in their arguments. To close these gaps, critical approaches with different perspectives and theoretical frameworks began to appear in the 1980s. Included among them are the leftist or Marxist theorists. According to them, South Korea's growth model is far from a success story as commonly told. The unstable and exploitative aspects of the South Korean economy and the unbalanced development of Korean society as a whole are identified along with uneven distribution of wealth and deterioration of the quality of life (Hart-Landsberg 1989, 1993; Lie 1991; Bello and Rosenfeld 1990).

These critical views have effected a revision of the one-sided 'orthodox' economist's view of Korean modernization, with more interest and attention to the social and political costs of late industrialization. Yet these critical approaches are as well inadequate as an explanation for South Korea's modernization, not least because of their economism. Economic disparities are one of the key features in understanding the modernization process of South Korea. Nevertheless, those who lean towards the new-left ideology often underrate a cultural space in which society expresses its self-problematization.

The problems with the theories and approaches to Korean modernity and modernization that I have just discussed are not unique to Korean studies. Indeed, they are part of the whole modernization paradigm. To understand the real problem of these theories and approaches, we need to have a further look at major modernization theories from a broader spectrum. To begin with, most historians perceive modernity as a quantitative concept rather than a qualitative one. Although their attempts are 'holistic,' the quantitative concept of modernity is limited to historical periodization in which the term 'modern' is used primarily in a

chronological sense.⁶ However, as Peter Osborne convincingly argues, modernity is qualitative not chronological (Osborne 1992). For economists, be they of the neoclassical or the neo-left, the primary interests reside in the interpretation of how development has been achieved and the practical implications of the South Korean case in development theories.

Sociologists, who may lack 'historical imagination,' tend to neglect the important questions of the relationships between structure and history, between social structure and human agency, and between culture and social structure. Their interests seem to be preoccupied by modernizing forces. Contrary to this, cultural studies, mainly conducted by anthropologists, have been more concerned with particular aspects of traditional legacies without referring to the modern structure until the late 1980s.

Finally, from the 1980s, political scientists have introduced theories of state formation in the developing world: developmental dictatorship, 'bureaucratic authoritarianism' (Han Sang-Jin, borrowed from O'Donnell), 'developmentalist state' (Johnson 1980, 1987; Evans 1987; Lim 1985), and 'soft-authoritarianism' (Bedeski 1994). While reflecting the social formation debates in the early 1980s,⁷ these theories collectively lack attention to an important element in modern state formation: civil society. Many of them treat the authoritarian state as largely a theoretical construct and tend to emphasize a rather closed and static view of the state.

In sum, there are four general approaches concerning modernity and modernization: historical (modernity understood only as a chronological category), economic (modernization understood as economic growth, often defined in purely quantitative terms), sociological (modernity defined as structural, i.e. ahistorical and acultural terms), and political (working with ideal types and dichotomies of authoritarian versus democratic regimes).

In the late 1980s and 1990s, there were new attempts seeking to bring the state and civil society together in a dialectical analysis (Koo 1993, 1998; Evans 1995). While admitting that the directive state intervened in all areas, they go further to examine how and why state intervention works in relation to civil society. However, taken together, various theoretical and practical questions about Korean modernity remain unanswered by the existing paradigms.

If we understand modernization as a long-term process of social formation rather than a specific historical event, we need to investigate the concrete forms in which the uniqueness of Korea's historical situation can be articulated in terms of colonialism, foreign occupation, civil war and the division of the nation. This approach might be able to show the motivating forces behind the spectacular advance of South Korea, enable us to abandon unhelpful categories of classical social theory, and allow us to move beyond dichotomous notions of tradition and modernity or agricultural and industrial society. Such an attempt has not only an analytic and theoretical meaning for the explanation of the distinctive experience of Korean modernity, but also normative significance for the practical purpose of seeking the autonomy of Korean society.

These considerations suggest that an adequate analysis of the Korean experience of modernity requires a comprehensive multidimensional approach to the

processes of modernization. It should go beyond a narrow explanation of the structure of South Korea's economy and political structure. Given the complexity of Korean modernization, developmental, functional and evolutionary theories of modernization are not well equipped to explain the changes that have occurred in Korea over the past four decades. These theories tend to overlook the complex history and organizational mechanisms of non-Western societies, and fail to recognize the central importance of historical and cultural contingency in social transformation. If Korea's modernization is seen as a historical transformation of the social world, the constellation of its modernity drives its distinctive features from its own past and the present conditions. The continuation of premodern tradition and a selective convergence of Western modernity have been an integral part of the dynamics of Korea's modernity. The approach proposed in this book, which centers on a primary reference to Korea's long-term civilizational processes, can deal with these problems and thus provide a better understanding of South Korea's modernization and emergent social, economic and political formations. Civilizational approach helps to understand modernization theories in a broader interpretive framework, in which points of reference go beyond capitalist development and liberal democracy.

Outlining the civilizational background to Korean modernity and how conventional (Western) modes of discourse regarding modernization fall short of explaining South Korea's path to modernity are the main tasks for the remainder of Part I of this book. It is not only appropriate but also necessary to take into account the historical and social conditions of premodern Korea, including the relationship between culture and structure, state and society, and the transformative force of particular elite agents. Chapter 1 will first examine how historical and civilizational forces set the preconditions to South Korea's modernization.

2. Civilization theories

The emergence of a 'world society' (Luhmann 1997)⁸ has accompanied the processes of globalization and the increasing interdependence of different nation-states. For some, the process of globalization assumes modernization, which is a singular, linear, positive or equalizing force, and incorporates non-Western countries into a homogenized world civilization, which is 'Western.'⁹ The tendency to analyze globalization and modernization in terms of the homogenization of political and economic systems is countered by a perspective that emphasizes the proliferation of differentiating conceptions or alternative models of modernity.¹⁰

This debate reflects the fact that, while most of the world's societies have endorsed to some extent modern (Western) configurations such as capitalism, liberalism and democracy, no single civilization or basic ideological principle has become dominant. Modernity may appear to constitute a world civilization at one level, but the wide range of alternative expressions of modernity in different parts of the world is evidence of the persisting regional, national and cultural differentiation in today's geopolitical configuration. This suggests a need for a new approach to the problem of the relationship between civilization and culture in the

modernization process. More specifically, it calls for an analysis of the dialectics between Western forms of modernity and other civilizational features.¹¹

Civilization is the largest known unit of socio-cultural study. Its sociological study contributes to the understanding of social action and social structure in terms of the symbolic order and its interrelations with power structures. The civilizational framework combines a specific religious or secular world view with a civilization's ideational value hierarchy, integrating textual symbols of the civilization, such as religious doctrines and political manifestos. A civilizational approach is useful for understanding major long-term sociological processes such as state formation and shifts in self-understanding (Elias), religious and economic rationalization of the world (Weber), and symbolic and material power balances within and between civilizations (Eisenstadt).

Definitions of civilization vary widely (Rundell and Mennell 1998). Since the eighteenth century, Western scholars have often cited the existence of cities as a primary indicator of civilization. Perry Anderson (1996: 28) provides the following useful etymological distinction between 'civilization' and the related term 'culture': 'The term "civilization" comes from the city and the urban world of citizens, while the term "culture" stems from the countryside and the world of peasants.' Modern usage of the term 'civilization' can be traced back to the Western Enlightenment where 'civilization' connoted development in evolutionist terms.¹² Civilization has been related to particular institutional dynamics and cultural paradigms, although it was often used interchangeably with culture. Perhaps the best way to understand the concept is to discuss two contrasting approaches to the study of civilizations, each with its own particular emphasis and point of reference: the materialist (or structuralist) approach and the culturalist approach. The former looks to an economic explanation of history in order to interpret and characterize the major world civilizations (Braudel, Wallerstein). By contrast, the latter seeks to understand civilizations in terms of their aesthetic, intellectual and ideational components (Huntington, Weber, and Eisenstadt). Let me explain these two approaches in more detail.

(1) Materialist approach

Braudel and Wallerstein provide broad dialectical and historical theories of the emergence of a capitalist world system. They regard production for extended market exchange as a sufficient definition of capitalist activity. Braudel (1986) focuses on the natural-geographic base of history and economic factors that, for him, confine the course of history. He stresses long-term trends (*longue durée*) to reveal the deep structure of material civilization as the basis for world history. While conceiving history as totalizing and global, Braudel regards civilization as relatively open-ended, being constantly constructed and reconstructed. He is aware of the problem of ambiguity in definitions of civilization and relates definition to historical processes (1993: 3–8).

Braudel uses the idea of civilization as a conceptual framework for understanding the pluralism and heterogeneity of the world system. While Braudel analyzes

civilization in terms of geography, cultural zones, cities and towns, societies and economies, his focus is on the economic and geographical factors, which he thinks fashion the course of world history. Furthermore, Braudel distinguishes *a* world-economy from *the* world economy (1986: 22). 'The world economy' is the economy of the whole world, while 'a world-economy' is an economically autonomous region whose internal linkages and exchanges yield a degree of economic unity. From his long-term perspective on material civilization, Braudel identifies a number of world-economies. He observes that the number of such world-economies declined over time as more successful world-economies expanded and absorbed former world-economies. Braudel's historical overview begins with an analysis of a series of merchant cities, including Venice, Antwerp, Genoa and Amsterdam, that dominated Europe's world-economy in the early modern period. From there he theorizes the development of nation-state markets and the eventual domination of European capitalism over other world-economies.

To understand this transition to European domination over other civilizations it is worthwhile examining 'early modernity' a little more closely, as it helps illuminate modernization in both European and other civilizations. Many scholars tend to confine the notion of early modernity to European societies, which emerged from a feudal past from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century (Goldstone 1998: 253). This kind of conceptualization concentrates on the social, political and economic transformation of Europe during these periods, and defines development elsewhere in relation to Europe. In so doing, this approach neglects the existence of early modern societies outside Europe.

Braudel's analysis is useful for understanding the global dynamism of human civilizations, but his view on the rise of the capitalist system in societies outside Western Europe is limited.¹³ As Goldstone points out, if we apply Marxist criteria (i.e. market-oriented production and profit-oriented merchants) to the concept of the early modern, 'early modern' societies are found all around the world much earlier than the sixteenth century (1998: 252, 256). Braudel uses the Chinese case to explain that 'capitalism did not automatically emerge out of a thriving market economy, but emerged from a certain kind of society' (1986: 600). Although he is aware of China's primacy between CE 1000 and 1500 in terms of the market economy in world history,¹⁴ his focus is on an emerging capitalist world economy. Despite such weaknesses, Braudel's long-term perspective on world history appreciates the autonomy of separate civilizations, and recognizes a trans-civilization process in the world economy. As such, the student of civilizations cannot ignore Braudel's contributions, but must instead selectively draw on it to help our understanding of both the past and the present.

The same can be said about the work of one of Braudel's followers, Immanuel Wallerstein. With the expansion of globalization discourse, Wallerstein has tried to explore the relevance of the concept of civilization to world-system theory (Wallerstein 1988, 1990). Despite his account of civilizations in the plural, Wallerstein identifies civilizations as only ideological constructs that serve rhetorical purposes and act as legitimizing projects for specific groups (1991: 141–5). For Wallerstein, the culture of the capitalist world-economy is still largely

epiphenomenal, notwithstanding his various clarifications. His emphasis on economy and the global history of capitalism, while of great importance for understanding the modern world and how it came into being, obscures the dynamism of cultural and political history (Robertson and Lechner 1985; Robertson 1992).

Wallerstein sees the history of the last 500 years as an integral evolution of the modern world system, which cannot be reduced to the history of separate states. In contrast to former world empires, which, according to Wallerstein (1979), were dominated by their political superstructures, the modern world system is structured primarily by a capitalist world economy.¹⁵ For Wallerstein (1984), the capitalist world economy is based on the extension of European colonialism and the participation of a number of politically separate colonial blocs in an increasingly interdependent economic system. The actions of the capitalist state originate in deeper movements of the global economy, resulting from structural changes in capital-labor relations.

Wallerstein sees global modernization as processes of accumulation, collectivization, polarization and differentiation. He analyzes the world system in terms of a hierarchy of economic sectors (zones) based on an international division of labor. He defines these sectors as the core, the semi-periphery and the periphery. Wallerstein (1995) suggests, as institutionalized bipolar ideologies have become outmoded and as the capitalist world economy has expanded, there are growing alliances between core states. Expansion of the capitalist world economy, he says, will not only increase the numbers of people fleeing peripheral countries for refuge in core ones, but it will also deepen the division between core and periphery, with the economic power and the large welfare apparatuses it affords remaining in the core, while economic dependence, destitution and poverty prevail in the periphery.

This polarization, according to Wallerstein, results from the inherent relationship between core and periphery, which inevitably produces wealth in the former at the expense of the latter. Yet core states are also dependent upon the periphery. For example, states in the core have collaborated to oppose the economic, technological and, to some extent, military development of peripheral and semi-peripheral states. This helps to ensure the continued hegemony of the core over the periphery and semi-periphery. On the other hand, there are numerous contemporary examples of reverse dependency (e.g. the dependence of the US financial system on the major debtor economies of the periphery), with financial and commodity markets often wildly fluctuating as a result of events and processes occurring in the periphery of an ever-expanding global economy. Of the restructuring of the world economic system currently under way, Wallerstein argues that the transformation of anti-systemic movements and their search for new ideologies make the world system unpredictable and unstable.

In summary, both Braudel and Wallerstein see civilizations as unfolding over the *longue durée*, and provide a dialectical conception of civilizational relationships in world history, which encompasses both the universal (world history) and the particular (civilizations). Wallerstein identifies this dialectic as one where the modern capitalist world system is in tension with culturally defined

local civilizations. Braudel sees the world being propelled toward civilizational unity while still maintaining cultural and political diversity: 'The present civilization today is that vast tract of time which dawned at the beginning of the 18th Century, and whose dusk is still far off; the world is being violently propelled toward unity, while at the same time it remains fundamentally diverse' (1980: 211). By drawing upon, but not limiting ourselves to, Braudel's and Wallerstein's understanding of multilayered civilization and open-ended history, we can imagine the world system in a multidimensional fashion accompanying inter-civilizational interactions.

Braudel's and Wallerstein's civilizational approaches, however, are less relevant, or at least less easily linked, to the East Asian problem than to some other cases. This is partly because of their Eurocentric orientation and economic predilections, and partly because of the region's relative self-containment in the early modern period. For instance, the failure of the embryonic world economic system of Sung China (960–1279) to fully develop obviously had something to do with the cultural–political framework (i.e. the Chinese imperial empire), which toned down the potential dynamism of the economy. Korea and Japan developed more extreme versions of self-containment based on their political ideologies in the early modern era. In the Korean case, this self-containment tendency was reinforced by Japanese colonization. The result was a double discontinuity: the discontinuity already inherent in the Japanese trajectory, and the discontinuity of Korea's colonial situation.

Regional geopolitics played a crucial role in the development of East Asia. The strategic locations of China, Japan and Korea greatly influenced one another's economic, cultural and political history. The geopolitical situation during the early modernity shows that suspicion and tension between China, Korea and Japan compromised the growth of genuine international trade that might have stimulated commerce and industry (Palais 1996). This constellation of historical and regional factors can be better analyzed in relation to the question of different socio-cultural spheres and correspondingly different rationalities.

(2) Culturalist approach

Huntington provides a culturalist approach to the discussion of civilization. He defines civilization in cultural terms as 'the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes human from other species' (1993: 24). For him, civilizations are super or multi cultures, of which he identifies seven or eight: Western, Chinese, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin-American and African.¹⁶ A civilization is defined by such common objective elements as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and the subjective self-identification of people (collective identity). Interestingly, he sees Japan as an exception: a civilization of its own, because of its cultural differences with other countries in the region.

In his 'clash of civilizations' thesis, he treats civilizations as rather incommensurable, so that there always exists a possibility of open conflict between them. He foresees that the central axis of world politics in the future is likely to be the

conflict between the West and the rest of the world, and the responses of non-Western civilizations to Western power and values (1993: 23, 39). In Huntington's civilizational framework, religion is the central force motivating and mobilizing people. Different civilizations have different cultural values which underlie personal behavior and institutional patterns and which are important sources of personal and political identities (1993: 25–6). Huntington argues that we can hardly be unaware of the violent conflicts in the several regions in which religion appears to be a major factor (1993: 26). For Huntington, religion, along with other civilizational agencies such as history, language, culture and tradition, is seen as a prime element in a historically grounded world-historical achievement of spiritual, ethical–political consciousness. In this regard, Huntington seems to draw on the Hegelian tradition when he emphasizes value-related conflicts between/within liberal and non-liberal societies.

Huntington's civilizational paradigm underestimates nationalism and the role of the nation-state as a concrete political agency. There are strong reasons for thinking that conflict and cooperation arise not between civilizations, but between states based more on ideological and strategic interests than cultural identities. The problem in Huntington's model is that he uses the concept of civilization selectively, rationalizing existing conflicts in global politics. He does not adequately account for the changing mixture of coercion and consent within and between civilizations. In addition, he subordinates the 'secondary' or 'peripheral'¹⁷ civilizations to the 'major civilizations,' minimizing the specific characteristics of the former.

Huntington correctly recognizes that religions provide individuals and groups with a sense of identity anchored in history; a stable sense of communal solidarity important to personal and social integration, as well as behavior that draws lines between 'us' and 'them.' Nevertheless, Huntington's understanding of religion as the main source of conflict between civilizations has insufficient nuance especially when compared to other civilizational approaches that view religion as an analytical category of primary importance.

Religion in the early twentieth century was seen as playing a key role in the evolution of society. For the purposes of the comparison of civilizations, East Asian religions were often viewed as 'naturalistic,' originating in nature worship and supporting despotic regimes, while Christianity was viewed as 'world rejecting,' supporting secular democratic states, science and capitalism. However, one needs to explore the contextual as well as the meta-contextual meaning of a religion in comparative religious history. Weber's interest was in religions and their relationships to other socio-cultural aspects of action. Similarly, Braudel (1993: 169) points out that, unlike those of the West, religion and society in the civilizations of the Far East have supported each other. Furthermore, the role of religion in the West as a separate sphere, whose autonomy the political community must respect, has no counterpart in the cultural traditions of East Asian civilization.

While comprehensive world views are a key theme of civilizational theory, another fundamental theme concerns the processes that unfold on the basis of these world views and lays the ground for comparative analysis. In this regard,

Weber (1958) investigates the relationship between religion and society and reaches a conclusion that it is only in Western civilization that cultural processes unfolded and resulted in the most fateful force in modern civilization – capitalism. He relates particular categories of action, such as purposive–rational action, to their corresponding structures, such as the capitalist economy. Weber's notion of the progressive rationalization of social life implies that for this process to occur there must be an appropriate change in consciousness involving more abstract principles of reason, which generate corresponding social structures (1978a: 399). Weber is able to link world domination through science and technology to the capitalist restructuring of social relations that emerged in association with an earlier methodical domination of 'the inner world' found in Protestantism. Weber argues that one of the fundamental elements of the spirit of modern capitalism – the cultural element – is the Puritan work ethic and associated worldly asceticism. By contrast, other civilizations, including those extant in East Asia, did not develop these values and hence, Weber suggests, did not develop capitalism.

Weber, however, does not claim that one civilization is more rational than another.¹⁸ Reason and its embodiment in structure (i.e. the process of rationalization) are neither homogeneous nor continuous. Rationality can be defined by different logic(s), depending on the cultural context and social group whose socio-economic conditions are different from other groups. Weber was aware of this diversity and labeled the different characteristics of Asian societies' 'patrimonialism' as opposed to Western 'feudalism.'¹⁹ This typological distinction by Weber implies a possibility of a different process of rational development. Weber shows this in his *The Religion of China*: 'Confucian rationalism meant rational adjustment to the world; Puritan rationalism meant rational mastery of the world' (1964: 248). Here he spends much effort and commits much space to describing the patrimonial characteristics of Chinese society, and comparing them with those of feudal societies in the West.²⁰ Weber tries to explain why capitalism fails to appear in China by deploying an ideal typical analysis: 'The Chinese lacked the central, religiously determined and rational method of life ... Alien to the Confucian was the peculiar confinement and repression of natural impulse which was brought about by strictly volitional and ethical rationalization and ingrained in the Puritan' (1964: 243–4). His book on China maintains that this region of the world lacked significant external trade relations and that Confucianism gave an ideological form to a formidable patrimonial bureaucracy, within a predominantly agricultural economy.

Weber's interpretation of Confucianism is ambiguous: he interprets it as an expression of the rationalism of patrimonial bureaucracy and at the same time sees it as a concept advocating 'adjustment to the world' and absence of 'tension.' Weber identifies Confucian tradition with this-worldly and traditionalistic orientations of the world view. Metzger raises a serious question about Weber's interpretation of Confucianism. Contrary to Weber, Metzger finds a high level of tension between the ideal (goal) and the reality and conceptualizes a 'predicament' at the heart of (Neo) Confucianism (1977: 59, 81). He emphasizes an indigenous transformative impulse that existed among many Chinese, particularly the

intellectuals, on the eve of modernization. He suggests that the condition to 'escape from predicament' might be comparable to the pervasive tension that Weber found in the Puritan definition of the human condition. According to Metzger, Neo-Confucianism has its own version of self-transformation as the basis of societal transformation (1977: 17).

By contrast, Balazs (1964) focuses on structural rather than cultural and religious factors in China's development. According to Balazs, the bureaucratic top-down control extant in China did not allow any room for spontaneous accumulation of wealth among other social groups. This, he suggests, was primarily responsible for the lack of competitive capitalism. Balazs argues: 'the supreme inhibiting factor was the overwhelming prestige of the state bureaucracy, which maimed from the start any attempts of the bourgeoisie to be different, to become aware of themselves as a class and fight for an autonomous position in society' (1964: 53). Braudel reinforces this point by pointing out that accumulation could be achieved only by the state, or with the state's backing and strict supervision. It was the Chinese bureaucratic tradition that made the most ancient living civilization 'the youngest and the most active force in all the less developed countries' (Braudel 1993: 216). This civilization and bureaucratic tradition, perhaps more than in any other tradition, had been characterized by a high degree of personalization of political power, as embodied in the emperor and the imperial dynasty's claim to a heavenly mandate.

The level of personalization of state power varies widely across civilizations. Hamilton (1990) contrasts Western patriarchal authority with Chinese patriarchy: Western patriarchy stresses the ultimate supremacy of persons, while Chinese patriarchy emphasizes the ultimate supremacy of roles.²¹ In Chinese civilization, the level of personalization is high not only because of the role played by sacred kingship, but also because of a certain counterweight inherent in the notion of a socio-cosmic order. Eisenberg (1998: 90–5) criticizes Hamilton's interpretation for its ahistorical, formalistic approach which leads to a narrow application of Weberian typologies and concepts.²² Although Weber's ideal type of patrimonialism is a more nuanced institutional approach for unveiling historical transformation than Hamilton wants to accept, Weber's typology of state structures is limited by his notion of religious rationalization. Weber underestimates the cultural dynamics of social transformation and the different configurations of culture and power in civilizational premises.

Confucianism contributed not only to the accumulation and monopolization of power in state formation but also to the formation of basic cultural traits, although there were other religions such as Buddhism and Taoism reciprocally influencing Confucianism.²³ In this regard, Weber's interpretation of China is inaccurate in that he failed to appreciate the syncretistic ideal of the Tang dynasty (618–906), and to a lesser extent the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), which tried to attain the humanity of Confucius through Taoist and Buddhist meditation.²⁴ He also failed to appreciate the constitutive roles of Buddhism and Taoism in the Chinese cultural traditions. Although initially Confucianism was intolerant towards Taoism and later Buddhism, Taoist and Buddhist ideas significantly influenced

late Confucianism, making it more metaphysical and speculative. Zhang (1998) argues that Confucianism as a ruling ideology contributed to the philosophy of state and morality, while Taoism contributed to the creation of a philosophical ontology. Because of Confucianism's early monopoly, many Western scholars, including Weber, tend to see the entire Chinese state philosophy as being Confucian. There is no doubt that Confucianism has had considerable influence on Chinese society and civilization as well as its neighboring countries; China itself is nevertheless a much more complicated cultural entity than Weber's interpretation would suggest.²⁵

Weber's vision of a universal history of culture therefore seems deficient in explaining the civilizational trajectory of the East Asian region. Civilization is an inherited, ongoing and dynamic process and religion is not a fixed category. Continuing reform within a civilization and borrowing of new ideas from outside led to an open process of creation. Japan and China are cases in point. Japan utilized the civilizational form of hybridity to liberate itself from being as the West's 'uncivilized Other.' Japan's adoption of Western ideals led to the identification of China and Korea as its 'uncivilized Other' which was used as a rationale for subsequent Japanese invasions. Chinese civilization also shows a transformative capacity in response to external challenges. China adopted an 'anti-systemic' socialist political regime to escape the ravages of capitalism, rather than falling into a position of 'semi-peripheral' subordination to the capitalist core (Larson 1995: 40). These self-transformative capacities, which embrace relatively autonomous cultural, as well as economic and political forces, are also found in the modernization processes of other East Asian states such as Korea and Taiwan.

The work of S. N. Eisenstadt is particularly useful in navigating through the Weberian problem. Eisenstadt points out that structural evolutionary theory cannot do full justice to the variety of societal dynamics. Structural evolutionary theory assumes that various dimensions of expansions (i.e. symbolic and structural differentiation) occur at the same rate (Eisenstadt 1992: 385). Thus it fails to account for the tremendous variety in the institutional dynamics and construction of political centers in various societies. Eisenstadt is more sensitive to the complexity of specific civilizational patterns, political regimes and specific political economies than, for example, Huntington or Weber. He draws on the history of imperial formations to explain the relationship between the evolution of different institutional formations and various contingent historical contexts. The potential for transformation is embodied in the dynamic configuration of culture and power structures.

Eisenstadt notes that far-reaching cultural and political transformations tend to develop in certain civilizations – the so-called 'axial civilizations' (1997: 123). By this, he means those civilizations that crystallized during the period from 500 BCE to the first centuries CE when new ontological visions emerged, including conceptions of the basic tension between the transcendental and mundane orders. These conceptual developments were subsequently institutionalized through a restructuring of the social order and power relations. Thus there first developed a high level of distinctiveness of social centers, perceived as symbolic

and organizational entities, and a continuous interaction between center and periphery. It was mainly in those axial civilizations that 'this-worldly' (or a combination of this- and other-worldly) orientations were channeled to imperial or feudal imperial regimes by religious or intellectual groups.

The focus in Eisenstadt's analysis has been the effects of religious systems on the central symbols, identities and institutions of the political sphere (1968: 11). Eisenstadt's conception of civilization starts with the basic tension between the world and the transcendental order, in which the latter demands a moral transformation of the former. This tension distinguishes all 'post-axial' civilizations from pre-civilized societies and archaic civilizations. He resolves the problem of the relationship of religion and revolution by classifying civilizations according to the way in which they reconcile, or attempt to reconcile, the morally demanding tension between the world and the transcendental order, and the way in which this is mediated by an autonomous cultural elite composed of intellectuals and priests. Eisenstadt identifies three possibilities: an other-worldly or religious solution (Buddhism, Hinduism), an inner-worldly or secular solution (Confucianism); or a mixed solution (monotheistic religions) (1982: 17–19).

In the tension-resolving process, all social institutions were turned into ideologies and problematized, and a great variety of religious and intellectual orientations emerged. The political elite were transformed into claimants for cultural authority, in competition with the autonomous cultural elite. Most of all 'center-periphery' relations became dynamitized by the possibility of politico-religious alliances which could challenge the central authority. On this point, Eisenstadt, in contrast to Weber, argues that there was no lack of transcendental vision or tension within Confucian China. It was a secular definition of the tension and a this-worldly mode of its resolution (1985a: 168–86). The tension between the transcendental and mundane orders was defined in metaphysical and/or ethical terms, which resulted in the various rationalizations of the cultural (religious) orientation.

Eisenstadt (1985b) emphasizes the effects of culture on social change and the linkage between cultural designs and social groups. They provide a source of dynamism for the restructuring of political institutions. However, he does not clearly explain in what manner social conditions promote religious changes, and why different ways of overcoming the tension between the world and the transcendental order are arrived at. What is important for him are the social effects of different transcendental visions. What separates civilizations from one another is the mode of resolution of the transcendental tension, and the way in which the tension is defined in the first place. He admits to the influence of different cultural traditions but only through the activities of the different elites who are both the carriers of such traditions and major partners in ruling coalitions. Thus the ability of elite coalitions to determine the direction of development is circumscribed by prevalent cultural patterns or – in Eisenstadt's terms – by the way in which the relationship between the transcendental and mundane orders is resolved and institutionalized in any particular civilization.

Despite the usefulness of Eisenstadt's conceptualization of the axial revolutions for comparison of civilizations, 'the axial breakthroughs do not converge in a

common cultural model or a set of structural principles' (Arnason 1998c: 71). While civilization is relevant to the transition to revolutionary modernity, the characteristics of the axial breakthrough do not directly determine the path to modernity. There are a variety of combination of models of the civilizational process and modernity, and a wide range of possibilities for conflict resolution between the two.

Arnason's civilizational approach provides the most helpful framework for comparative and historical-sociological studies, especially to the discourse of multiple modernities. He analyzes civilizational constellations in terms of divergent patterns of configurations of culture and power. In this approach to civilizational analysis, the concepts of culture and power are seen as mutually interconnected yet irreducible constituents of social-historical structures. Arnason (1998c) adopts a post-Weberian approach while utilizing and expanding Elias' understanding of the transformations of power structure in a broader civilizational context (see Chapter 3 of this book) and Castoriadis' conception of cultural autonomy (Chapter 4). Arnason reveals the dynamic mechanisms of power and culture through which the diversity of social forms and plurality of rationality are unfolding.

For the purpose of this book, it is worthwhile to discuss Castoriadis' notion of 'imaginary institution of society,' which is used as a concept of socio-cultural creativity in Arnason's civilizational framework. Castoriadis (1987: 175) argues for the ontological genesis of a society, which can be seen as its original self-supposition. This self-presupposition of origin is conceived in terms of creation as a response to ontological genesis, a process that is indeterminate, incomplete, individual and collective, and psychical and social. Castoriadis (1987: 215) recognizes the need for an institutional framework within which societies can function as autonomous self-institutions. The imaginary significations hold society together and allow society to continue wanting itself by constituting self-representation of society as a foundation of meaning and value. For Castoriadis, societies create their own closures to meaning, and history is the self-alteration/deployment of society over time. In his version, for instance, democracy is seen as an imaginary creation with a newly invented symbolic political and social order and as an open process of creation (Arnason 1990).

Drawing on a hermeneutical methodology, Arnason incorporates Castoriadis' imaginary significations into his civilizational framework. The role of culture in society is considered to reflect on the relation between culture and reason and their coordination of social action, with reference to resonances of meaning. The cultural imagination is a transcendent disposition that delivers social creativity, historical change and basic institutional forms. Arnason uses the cultural imaginary not only to explain underlying archetypal features in a society, but also to show the dialectical relation of instituting and instituted power in the political autonomy through the transformation of imaginations. Thus, Arnason opens up a new avenue for the multiple modernities where civilization theories can explore self-reflexive, self-instituting autonomy of society in a given civilization.

As Arnason has shown in his comparative work on the Soviet (1993) and the Japanese (1998c) models, the different power configurations and different levels

of cultural openness and creativity in different countries and civilizations reveal the complexity and variations of modernity. Using this approach, we can argue that Korean modernization is grounded in the political elite's particular vision and the people's reaction to it in its historical development unfolding. Arnason's approach is informative for Korea's civilizational analysis as it provides insights into the indeterminate linkage between interpretive patterns and institutional arrangements. It helps explain how Korean tradition or cultural heritage contributed to a new form of social organization and provided the foundation for an alternative modernity.

3. Korean civilizational development under the shadow of China and Japan

In this section, I will sketch the place of Korean civilization within the East Asian region, as a background of Korean modernization and state formation. The argument here is that the different experience of Korean modernization comes in part from a different cultural premise that can be explained, to a significant extent, by the (culturalist) civilizational approach.

To begin with, we must first acknowledge Korea's civilizational debt to Imperial China. While we need to be cautious of a deterministic reading of Korean civilization through the lens of Chinese civilization, it is important to note the degree of influence that the rise and fall of the Chinese Empire has had on the China-centered civilizational complex in East Asia. Due to its traditionally central position in East Asia, China held political and cultural hegemony in the region through the institutional and symbolic tribute system. Moreover, throughout Korea's Choson period (1392–1910), classical Chinese was the *de facto* diplomatic and academic language of East Asia.

There were several key characteristics of Chinese civilization that matter here. First, rice cultivation allowed the support of a very large population and required the investment of large levies of workers. The mutual reinforcement of state power, trade, and the support of a large population, led to the highly centralized state that has historically dominated China. In addition, the religious foundation of Chinese civilization played a critical role in both the origin and long-term continuity of the state system. In the Zhou dynasty (1027–403 BC) the concept of the 'mandate of heaven' developed for the formal legitimation of dynastic rule. This system of dynastic political rule has been described as a liturgical government, based on moral authority backed by military force. Ancestor worship and the associated concept of filial piety were key elements in this system.

Within the China-centered world, Korea was located as a gateway into Northeast Asia, where it was traditionally a tributary country to the Chinese Empire and a cultural transmitter to Japan. China's major interest in Korea was to keep it as a buffer state under its influence (Lum 1969: 177). While Korea was subject to the political and cultural hegemony of China, it developed as an independent state with a distinct ethnic identity. Within the Chinese civilizational orbit, Korea became a self-styled Confucian orthodoxy.

In this conjunction, it is interesting to note the different patterns of adaptation between the two main peripheral states of Chinese civilization – Korea and Japan. First, following the Chinese model, Korea developed a highly centralized state, capable of containing (restraining) its own decentralizing dynamics. In contrast, Japan, despite a very determined attempt to create a centralized state, developed a type of decentralized feudalism where power was held by feudal lords who developed a culture based on hierarchy, respect for family, and ancestor worship within a framework of Shinto, Buddhist and Confucian values.

Second, Japan and Korea exhibited very different modes of handling the threat of Chinese cultural hegemony. While Korea readily accepted Chinese hegemony based on the imagined kinship of a benign ‘big brother,’ Japan kept a distance from China in an effort to protect its cultural autonomy. This difference in the autonomous role of cultural power was exemplified in the two countries’ receptiveness to Neo-Confucianism. In Japan, Neo-Confucianism was combined with many aspects of the early Japanese religion, Shinto, and harmonized well with Japan’s state and imperial cult. The impact of Neo-Confucianism on Korean society was far stronger than in Japan. Confucian ethics and values were thoroughly embedded in the consciousness of Koreans to the extent that Korea’s linguistic and social systems are closely linked to Confucian-oriented group values and norms.

The uneven influence of Chinese culture on Japanese and Korean cultures can also be seen in the use of written language. Chinese written language predated those of other East Asian civilizations and thus achieved literary hegemony in the region. Japan and Korea were easily absorbed into the Chinese civilizational trajectory owing to the importance of written Chinese. Both the Japanese and Koreans devised ways of adapting Chinese characters for their own needs. The Koreans developed *idu* (and later the more developed system *hyangch’al*) out of Chinese characters in the seventh century. In this system, Chinese characters were arranged in Korean word order either having the Korean sound or sharing its meaning. This method of transcription later influenced the creation of the Japanese writing system known as *man’yogana*. The Japanese also adapted the Chinese characters to Japanese syntax by simply adopting Chinese character, resulting in the emergence of a distinctive Japanese literacy, *kana*, in the eighth century. The differences between the two countries, however, lie in the way their phonetic scripts were accepted and spread.

For the Japanese, monosyllabic Chinese writing was ill-suited to their polysyllabic Japanese language so that they developed *hiragana* scripts as part of the infrastructure of Japanese culture from as early as the ninth century. This enabled them to preserve their own ancient myths and maintain other oral indigenous traditions in a Japanese phonological system (Takayama 1995). By contrast, the Koreans failed to popularize the Korean phonetic scripts. The Chinese language became the medium of written communication in Korea in spite of an outstanding indigenous alphabet, *han’gul*, created by and for Koreans in 1446. The reason for this variance lies in the different social structures and ideologies of the two countries, as well as the difference in their relationship with China. In Korea,

Chinese culture, particularly Confucianism, was thoroughly accepted and played a significant role in the formation of the political ideology and structure of the state. The *yangban* intellectual bureaucratic aristocrats tried to retain their monopoly on access to learning by continuing to use the difficult Chinese writing system, which had a different syntactic structure from the Korean language (Lee 1984: 193). Because of the political and religious orientations of the Korean ruling class, the use and spread of *idu* and Korea's indigenous scripts, *han'gul*, was limited. This in turn made Korea's ruling class more dependent on China's recognition for their own legitimation. By contrast, the Japanese ruling class made their traditional authority secure through the 'preservative function' of the *kana* scripts. The political and social structure of Korean society was reinforced by Neo-Confucianism and contributed to the long presence of the Choson dynasty.

We can clearly trace the influence of a Chinese cultural heritage, and, in particular (Neo) Confucianism, on both Japanese and Korean cultural systems. In terms of shared cultural orientations, both countries display a Confucian emphasis on interpersonal moral and social values in terms of mutual reciprocity and responsibility (often expressed through an idealized relationship between family stability and the stability of the social order). More recently in the modern era, this orientation has been transformed into the so-called Confucian 'work ethic' where particular forms of interpersonal relations and norms are promoted in order to enhance group identity and productivity in the workplace. We can argue, therefore, that in general the inseparability of morality, society and politics was emphasized throughout the Confucian tradition of East Asia.²⁶

Nevertheless, a closer analysis of the two countries and their relationship to Chinese civilization reveals differences in the patterns of Confucianization in Korea and Japan. More specifically, close attention to the relationship of culture to politics (power) in Japan reveals greater discontinuity than continuity with Confucian values. In Korea, Confucianization engendered an elite Confucian bureaucracy, as well as an authoritarian and conservative cultural tradition. Korea's Confucian political and cultural formations help to explain the extent of an autonomous national identity prior to the twentieth century. By contrast, Japan's 'incomplete' Confucianization allowed Japan to reformulate Japanese Confucianism, as with Japanese Buddhism, in relation to the state during the Meiji period. This enabled Japan to formulate a unique and distinctive national identity while pursuing the forces of modernization.

In Japan, symbols of power and ritual were very important to concepts of authority. Japanese Confucianism was never able to undermine the importance of traditional religion as the symbolic basis of political authority. This fact contributed to the successful separation of imperial (symbolic) authority from state power during the Meiji period. For Arnason, it was this separation of cultural authority from the power of the bureaucratic state that made Japan's radical restructuring possible in the modern period (1998b). During the Meiji transformation, Japan restructured the pattern of centralization of its political system, beginning with the abandonment of the samurai feudal system and the restoration of the

Emperor of Japan. In doing so, the Japanese found a new formula that enabled them to define a distinctive national identity (on the basis of an 'indigenous' traditional heritage) while at the same time opening up Japanese society to the forces of modernization.

In contrast, the Korean state, due in part to the legacy of its dependency on China, was unable to provide strong symbolism or military power as had the Meiji state in the nineteenth century Japan. During this period, Korean society followed an isolationist policy, in accordance with its view of itself as a self-contained society. Korea thus lost an opportunity at this juncture to reform its social structures and build a new national identity on more autonomous and more modern grounds.

The differences between the Japanese and Korean experiences and development of modernity can also be traced back to differences in the rationalization of the world based on their specific civilizational premises. The most obvious difference was the role of their indigenous religions: Japanese Shintoism and Korean Shamanism. From a comparative perspective, we find some interesting parallels and contrasts between Korean Shamanism and Japanese Shinto. Both religions are archaic primordial religions and share a number of common elements. These include the cult of ancestors, geomancy, animism and magic. Both religions developed from polytheism to a more elaborate mythology, while containing an ambiguous characteristic with regard to the Absolute. Both religions can be called naturalistic in the sense that we are not sure whether they assume the presence of a personalized God-creator or some different principle of creation. Finally, both religions have no concept of reward and punishment in another world.

However, there are significant differences between the two that affected the later development of the two civilizations. First and foremost, Korean Shamanism was not institutionalized or reconstructed in the way Shinto was in Japan. The implications are several. The non-institutionalized character of Korean Shamanism meant that it had less transformative capacity and was more adaptable than an institutionalized religion. Moreover, while both religions formed the basis of the people's world view and were deeply rooted in national identity, only Japanese Shinto developed into a form of moral nationalism that evoked a nationalistic dedication to a natural cosmic order in which the Emperor occupied the ritual center of the world.

By institutionalizing Shinto, Japan achieved a unique combination of symbolic integration and structural differentiation. The failure to institutionalize Shamanism in Korea, however, resulted in the less successful construction of a Korean collective identity than was achieved in Japan. Shinto was institutionalized as a national religion to differentiate it from other imported religions, even though it adopted Buddhism²⁷ and incorporated ideas from Confucianism and Taoism. Korean Shamanism, on the other hand, failed to provide a foundation for modern nationalism in the early stages of the modernization process. Because of the absence of an institutionalized counterweight to orthodoxy, the relationship between Buddhism and Confucianism became more confrontational in Korea. Shinto as the state religion had a decisive influence on Japanese politics,

incorporating other religions into its comprehensive religious system during the modernization process. By contrast, Korean Shamanism was absorbed into the other religions. It contributed to the other religions by shaping these imported traditions, while remaining an element of popular culture.

Finally, as the indigenous religion Korean Shamanism indirectly influenced the way in which Koreans dealt with imported religions and with Chinese cultural hegemony in general. Owing to the lack of an institutionalized basis, Shamanism in Korea was unable to provide a buffer to Chinese cultural hegemony. By contrast, Japanese Shinto helped maintain Japan's more distant and ambivalent relationship to China, while Korea became – at least in some ways – a perfect embodiment of Chinese culture than the Chinese state itself. The different cultural premises between Japan and Korea contributed to develop their divergent adaptation within the wide Chinese civilizational sphere.

Eisenstadt, in *Japanese Civilization* (1996b), tries to combine historical or cultural approaches to the study of society and civilization, allowing enough room for different cultural models. Here, variability arises from different combinations of structural and symbolic differentiation. Axial civilizations are characterized by discrepancies between the structural differentiation of the social division of labor and the differentiation of elite functions, resulting in autonomous elites. He treats Japan as an exception to this general explanation. Japan had high structural differentiation but a low distinction between division of labor and elite function, resulting in low elite autonomy. Eisenstadt defines Japan as a non-axial civilization that deviated from the axial civilization model, with its socio-political and economic progress not linked to religious morals and goals defined in universal and transcendental terms (1992: 396, 1997: 123). He outlines the development of a characteristically modern structural differentiation in Japanese society prior to Western influence.²⁸

In Eisenstadt's framework, Japan represents a significant instance of the development of multiple cultural programs and institutional formations of modernity. Eisenstadt (1996a) attributes Japan's radically different mode of modernization to a variety of social factors, including a conception of service to the community and the absence of any transcendentially oriented conception of either individuality or institutional legitimation. This contributed to social interaction based on the extension of trust in flexible, generalized settings. The close connection of this trust to achievement and solidarity constructed a system grounded in self-referential reflexivity, thereby promoting the openness and predisposition to change that facilitated modernization.

Korea, unlike Japan, can be seen as a case of peripheral axial civilization, in the sense that it experienced 'axial' breakthroughs under Chinese influence by subordinating its autonomy to an imported axial civilization. Yet in Korea, in this case like Japan, there were no autonomous religious or intellectual groups promulgating a universal utopian vision in the transition to modernity. In initiating social reforms or revolutions, the reconstructive actors (e.g. the Tonghak Revolution or the Reform Movement of the Progressive Party) were limited by their renewal of conservative concerns and by the shortage of a transcendental ideal.

The structural–institutional formations and dynamics that arose in Korea were restrained by the lack of transformative potential.

As axial breakthroughs do not necessarily presuppose the emergence of strictly universalistic cosmological belief systems, modernity can be created in various civilizational contexts. In the Korean case, modernity was first constructed by the colonial state and later by a developmentalist state. The early failure of Korea to modernize may be related to some long-term endogenous factors such as the political and economic conditions, social structures and local ideologies as well as external conditions.

In the eighteenth century, Korea faced a number of new social and economic challenges. This relatively stable bureaucratic agrarian society began to experience radical social transformation because of growing commercialization of the peasant household and greater cultural complexity (Deuchler 1997). Nevertheless, Korea remained orthodox in its avowal of highly speculative Confucian rituals. In the late nineteenth century, Korea's sino-centric world order collapsed as the Japanese took Korean territory over from China's influence, and blocked the advance of Russian influence (see Lee 1988). Korea was caught up in the twin processes of external pressures and internal disintegration.

Korean intellectuals could no longer ignore the growing hegemony of the West. Like the Chinese, they began to view the Japanese with new respect. Before this, Korea had perceived Japan as an unruly, barbaric and potentially dangerous neighbor on the periphery of the sino-centric world. But they began to see that Japan had transformed itself through incorporating Western influences, such as by the abolition of its feudal system and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. These measures were reinforced by the introduction of national military conscription, a compulsory and standardized education system, an elected national parliament, and a carefully constructed group of state-sponsored industrial, shipping and banking corporations. Reformist Koreans saw Japan as an ideal model of modernization, to adopt Western advances and retain a strong national identity at the same time. Yet, as Chung (1996: 48) argues, these reform-oriented *yangban* Confucian intellectuals failed to overcome their own Confucian world view. Neo-Confucianism in Korea was too conservative in its orientation to formulate a consistent challenge to the prevailing/dominant culture and its response to threats from the modern West.

Because of this legacy, Korea has had to face a twofold challenge of old problems and new hardships. Despite Korea's attempts to modernize, such as the implementation of a 'self-strengthening program' (1879–82), the inherent structural tensions between the factions of the political elite eroded the reformists' efforts (Deuchler 1977: 92–8). Westerners and the Japanese had a strong grip on Korea's economy through profoundly unequal treaty and tariff systems. In addition, Japan's imperial ambition went far beyond Koreans' expectations. As a result of Japanese imperialist ambitions, two wars were fought on the Korean peninsula: the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–5 and the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–5. The two wars proved to be a military success for the Japanese and left Korea under Japanese control and direction. Korea was made a protectorate in 1905.

The Korean army was disbanded in 1907 and the country formally annexed in 1910. Japanese colonialism promoted Korean modernization, but at the expense of the Korean people's welfare and cultural identity.

At this point, it is useful to examine the issue of collective identity and its connection with the problem of civilization. Divergent civilizations develop according to different ideological and institutional interactions and different cultural programs of identity. In East Asian civilizations, there was no tension between the political and transcendental orders; rather, these civilizations were founded upon the unity of civil and religious powers (Woodside 1998: 194–206; Eisenstadt 1998: 2–6). In contrast to Europe, the basic concept of the individual in East Asian culture is defined in relationship to the social environment, rather than in terms of a relationship to God (Yang 1998). The construction of collective identities is influenced or shaped by the codes through which ontological or cosmological premises and conceptions of social order prevalent in a society influence the specification of the definition of the major arenas. In Japan and Korea, religions contributed to the construction of collective identity through value orientations. The notion of the unity of the person with a large whole (e.g. nature, society, the cosmos), which is inherent in Shamanism, Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism, is central to both Japan and Korea.

Eisenstadt examines the Japanese collective identity as a socially constructed phenomenon, codified under the ideas of primordial origin, civility and sacredness. 'This Japanese collective consciousness was constructed in terms of sacral liturgical community with emphasis on sacredness or divinity and the uniqueness of the Japanese collectivity or nation' (Eisenstadt 1998: 144).²⁹ Japanese identity is presented as a combination of primordial and civic elements.³⁰ The construction of collective identities has been effected in all societies by the interaction among special social actors. The continual change in the composition of elites gave rise to very important changes in the constitution of collective identities.

On this point, the role of the Japanese *samurai* elite, which emerged in the feudal era along with warrior lords, can be contrasted with the Korean Confucian *literati* elite, who made significant contributions to the formation of the Korean cultural identity and the Neo-Confucian ethical system. In much of Japan's premodern history, different types of state formations have reflected the nature of the relationships between central authority and the diverse groups of *samurai*. Radical transformation of the social order occurred in the Meiji Restoration with the development of an industrializing society. Modernization occurred in Japan largely in the absence of social dislocation or political upheaval, even though it experienced alienation stemming from Western contact. Japan successfully transformed from Tokugawa feudalism (1603–1847) to a modern bureaucratic state through the symbolic restoration of the role of the emperor as the supreme authority. The restoration took place under the banner of traditional symbolism, mainly Confucianism, and the old order faced no direct intellectual challenge. In this process, the lower *samurai*, whose economic position deteriorated under the enforced peace of the Tokugawa, interpreted Confucianism in a pragmatic way: the *samurai* were transformed into bureaucrats, a hereditary

state of vassal-bureaucrat. Here, the Confucian values of merit, virtue and loyalty became a stimulus for state building and provided much of the impetus for modernization. In the Japanese case, Confucianism helped to legitimize a paternalistic form of elitism, and this became the moral basis for a system of decentralized and highly competitive power (Pye 1985: 57). At the same time, the military characteristics of the *samurai* shaped Japanese values and provided a social ethos in the modernization process – the combination of honorable competition and honorable cooperation (Ikegami 1995).³¹

In the case of Korea, Confucian scholars were able to create a public sphere without a wrenching split between the state and civil society, by monopolizing symbolic, administrative and coercive institutions.³² The early closure of Korean geopolitical space secured the *yangban class* from foreign invasions, and thus contributed to the continued survival of the old regime (Woodside 1998: 201–2). In this process, Confucian scholars consolidated Korea's collective identity in reference to Confucian cosmology and political and cultural programs. However, the Confucianism and Sinocentrism promoted by the Confucian *literati* were undermined by Korea's increased contact with the rest of the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many traditional standards were challenged on economic, intellectual and religious grounds. The political elite began to realize the fragmentation of their social world and became uncertain of their ability to reverse the crisis.

An understanding of the two countries' different civilizational trajectories needs further to take into account the historical background and geopolitical forces. These forces contributed both to Japanese colonization of Korea and Korea's own convoluted path to modernity. The different civilizational elements between the two contributed to how the two nations responded to Western powers and to the transforming geopolitical forces that resulted from Western imperial expansion in the nineteenth century. Korea's and Japan's encounter with Western civilization called for redefinition of their national collective identities and for reinterpretation of their symbols and symbolic behavior. The danger of acculturation always exists when there is a large gap between traditional and exogenous civilizational components.

The elements of a more advanced civilization can diffuse and contribute to the transformation of social order. However, the efficacy of this process depends on the cultural foundation and social forces of the society undergoing such acculturation. Korea's cultural traditions provided the fundamental semantic references for the absorption and enculturation of external influences. The same is true of Japan where the combination of modern industrial technology and Japanese feudal ethics was a major factor in Japanese modernization. The Japanese state has a long history of connecting itself to one of the three major religious traditions (Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism), often using them to instill discipline or inspire loyalty.³³ This tendency is also found in the Korean state where it has been reinforced by traditional family values, a hierarchical social structure, and the militarized concept of discipline introduced through Japanese colonialism. Such a creative approach to the construction of a collective national identity

should not be interpreted as merely juxtaposing the traditional and the modern. Rather, it represents the creation of new spaces amenable to cultural integration and development.

So far, I have stressed the significance of civilizational legacies, together with historical and geopolitical factors, for a different pattern of Korean modernity. However, Korean civilization can best be understood in the interplay of culture and power. In the following section, drawing on Arnason's open notions of culture and power, I shall examine the features of Korean civilization.

4. Peculiarities of Korean civilization

The most distinct characteristic of Korean civilization has been its social and political structures. Korea created a ruling class of aristocratic bureaucrats during the Yi dynasty (Choson, 1392–1910) by virtue of a number of historical, economic and socio-political forces. The stability of the Yi dynasty was made possible by Chinese protection of it from foreign invasion, economic growth and the influence of Confucianism (Palais 1984). The Confucian bureaucracy maintained a system of office based on a mixture of merit and heredity, thus keeping a balance between aristocratic and bureaucratic forces. Confucianism was used as an ideological tool for aristocratic bureaucrats to justify the hierarchical and hereditary social structures. Palais (1995) observed the development of political factionalism as one negative effect of Confucianism. Such tendencies towards factionalism continue to run throughout modern Korean society. Confucianism contributed to the reinforcement of bureaucratic factionalism and patrimonialism, providing the ideological foundation for political affiliations through metaphysical debates.

Given this background, how did these traditional political and cultural legacies affect Korean modernization and state formation in the post-war period? Korea, like China, inherited a patrimonial social structure.³⁴ Centralized bureaucracy dominated both the process of nation building, and the processes of modernization led by an aggressive project of economic development. South Korea is one of the most centralized states in the world. This can be seen in the very high level of bureaucratic control it extends over all sectors of society. Contrary to the popular view that the state acts as a hindrance to economic development, Korea's patrimonial ruling structure played a significant role in the industrialization process, through well-planned government intervention in the market. Korean state formation and modernization have operated in a broad political and cultural context that demonstrates the potential effectiveness of state-led development. This context includes particular forms of state intervention and forms of authoritarianism as well as a strong family system.

In Korea's modernization process, traditional culture and social values were dramatized according to a new script under the modern political and economic structures. Familism can be seen as a typical example. As Chang explains, 'the family is an aberturra not only for personal life but also for socio-political order, production systems, social welfare and demographic structure' (1997a: 51). To Chang, familism was not only part of the Confucian heritage, but also

reinvented in modern Korea as a 'tradition.' He claims that the nuclear family is not a new socio-economic entity in contemporary Korea: the critique of family nucleation is being used as 'a tool to deflect political pressure for a policy transition from developmentalism to progressive welfarism' (1997b: 23). This familism incorporates a patriarchal organization and 'filial piety,' and operates with vigor among modern Koreans, even though its form and strength has changed during modernization.

The familial tradition lies in ancestor worship that emphasized the permanence of social hierarchy and the kinship structure. As already mentioned, at the core of the Korean religious system there is no sharp distinction between the secular and the sacred. Everything was assumed to function smoothly as long as everyone followed his hierarchically structured kinship-rituals; i.e. filial piety. In this sense, it seems natural to think that the familial orientation takes on a secularization of Neo-Confucianism. While its role and influence has been considerably muted now, Confucianism continues to affect the Korean people in significant ways, particularly with regard to family structure, family cohesiveness and related moral values.

Helgesen argues that traditional Korean family values were extended to the political sphere during the colonial period as an educational policy (1998: 31–2). The colonial government tried to inculcate the virtue of political submission and loyalty to the state. Contrary to the colonial government's intention, this led to a decrease in loyalty to the state while further strengthening it in the family. The notions of the association of modernization with the secularization of society, the disappearance of the family and the growing importance of the individual can be true to Korean society only in a limited sense. While extended family and clan no longer have the cohesion and social significance they once had, there is less infatuation with the idea of individual freedom. The search for individual identity outside the family (and community) is not as appealing as it is in many Western cultures. Conformity to social norms, as opposed to a more autonomous individualism, is still ubiquitous in Korean culture. Modern Korean familism is a social mechanism for rationalization at the structural level with which Koreans manage the internal tensions in the formation of a new personality.³⁵

The uniqueness of the cultural ingredients in the modernization process in general, and in the dynamics of Korean politics in particular, have been observed by many commentators. However, how the mix works is yet to be explained. Here I consider briefly the arguments of Henderson, Pye, Palais and Helgesen.

Henderson conceptualizes a vortex model on the notion of 'mass society,' which is lacking in the formation of strong institutions or voluntary associations between the village and the ruler (Henderson 1968: 4). He attributes the mass society phenomenon to Korea's long-sustained homogeneity, unity and centrality, and sees these characteristics still continuing in modern Korea. In the politics of the vortex, it is a pattern of extreme centripetal dynamics that creates what he calls 'broad surface access' that absorbs the maximum number of power aspirants (Henderson 1968: 193–4). The vortex model is appealing in that political parties in modern Korea have been used as a tool by their leaders rather than having been

organized around ideologies, programs or principles. Furthermore, there still exists a strong sense of a political 'center.' The tension between the center and the periphery is manifested in regionalism. In this model, the concept of power is highly personalized to the extent that factionalism is seen as a natural consequence of power concentration.

Pye pays special attention to the paradox of self-righteous assertions, disciplined harmony in politics, and sees this as something to do with the Confucian concept of authority and the nature of power (1985: 215–28). Pye is correct in arguing that the question of (moral) legitimacy lies at the core of the Korean political culture, not only because of the centuries of Confucian legacy but also because of its political convulsions. In the course of Korean history, the Confucian tradition has been a cogent social and political force. Pye is incorrect, however, in explaining the internal dynamics of Korean politics through a single factor of Confucianism. There are a number of other societal dimensions that bear on Korean political development: tensions between different political elites, social relations constituted by internal and external coercion, and the different levels of rationalization of structure and culture. Furthermore, the Korean state has utilized the Confucian tradition to facilitate modernization and economic development and to shore up its political legitimacy. Pye seems particularly aware of the subtle reciprocal relationships between ruler and its subjects in the Confucian tradition. However, he does not recognize the institutionalization of power as a social process of institutional imagination, where the Confucian tradition may be seen to be more open to civil/political rights than is usually understood.³⁶

In summary, neither Henderson nor Pye takes into account the fact that state formation in Korea has developed according to its own peculiar internal dynamics. The state has shown its capacity to reform power apparatuses in innovative ways and use civilization-specific institutions to legitimize such changes. Furthermore, Henderson and Pye do not go far enough to explain the dynamic mechanism between traditional Korean institutions and values. Korean society is more diverse and heterogeneous than Henderson allows, and embodies more democratic values than presumed by Pye.

Helgesen (1998: 262), following Pye's culturalist approach but seemingly not falling into cultural determinism, argues that it is possible to develop a political system that takes into consideration indigenous core values such as personalism, in-groupness, networking and regional preference, while finding a new formula for the deconstruction/reconstruction of cultural tradition within a liberal democratic framework. This kind of effort can be seen as a selective reactivation of tradition by a modernizing force, rather than a shaping of modernity by tradition (see Arnason 1993).

So far, I have tried to explore the background of South Korea's alternative modernity in the civilizational context. This theoretical framework treats modernizing processes as developments of distinctive patterns of modernity. I have discussed civilizational theories for an interpretative framework of reference through which we can see a general picture of the historicity of particular Korean cultural traditions. To find the distinctive Korean path to, and pattern of,

modernity, the question of Korean civilization has been asked in relation to East Asian civilizations. The Korean pattern is not simply a particular case within the East Asian region, but a counter model against Western ones. Cultural traditions have played a significant part in shaping Korea's state formation and modernization, while incorporating external forces into a pre-existing structure of meaning and signification.

In Chapter 2, I will draw on the basic religious orientations and civilizational premises of Korea to illustrate the unique pattern of Korean modernity, and explore a new dimension that goes beyond the deterministic, reductionist explanations of social phenomena. I shall discuss two Korean religions – Shamanism and Confucianism – to explain the mechanisms at the core of Korean civilization that have shaped Korea's modernity.

2 The search for meaning in Korean culture

Chapter 1 outlined Korea's civilizational background for modernization and state formation. This chapter will provide a critique of both West-centered universalism and cultural determinism, explaining why they are deficient discursive constructs. Examining Fukuyama's 'end of history' and Jacobs' conception of patrimonialism as instances of the two traditions, I will demonstrate that monolithic views of modernity have limited relevance for explaining how different social forces have contributed to the conflicting configurations of Korean society and national identity.

Let me begin with a brief explanation of why Fukuyama's and Jacobs' counterpoised views of modernity are used here. Fukuyama thinks that Western civilization has come to the 'end of history.' In his view, further significant historical change is unlikely. He believes that the Western democratic and free-market institutions can be transplanted to all other societies and cultures. However, *prima facie* evidence suggests that, despite its premises of progress and moral renewal since the collapse of 'already existing socialism,' liberalism too is in decay. Basic contradictions exist within the capitalist economic system and the liberal democratic political institutions. Fukuyama tends to ignore the complex histories and indigenous organizational principles of nation-states like Korea, focusing instead on an evolutionary vision of history moulded by the liberal ideal of 'progress.' His 'end of history' thesis supports the explicit and implicit universalism.

The same universalism is presupposed by Jacobs' conception of development – 'the maximization of the potential of a society, regardless of the society's existing goals and organizational procedures' (Jacobs 1985: 6). Jacobs' analysis of Korea's modernization is useful in that he overcomes dichotomous thinking, i.e. universalism versus particularism. He examines the interactions between particularism and universalism during the modernization process in order to distinguish forms of particularism that are opposed to modernity, coexist with modernity or make specific positive contributions to the modernization process. In doing so, Jacobs takes Korea's political and cultural traditions seriously.

But Jacobs dismisses the possibilities of an inner transformation of these traditions toward modernity. He equates the (pre)existing levels of socio-cultural and political particularism with a constant social principle. In Jacobs' patrimonialism model, we can see a configuration of traditional Korean society in which

patrimonialism plays a key role in its interaction with the social structure. Yet his deterministic patrimonialism overshadows the image of modern Korea where patrimonialism becomes part of a much more pluralistic configuration. That is, patrimonialism in South Korea must be seen as only one aspect of an overall developmental strategy and as a constantly reconstructed social imaginary rather than a cultural framework for the whole. He fails to recognize that the introduction of universal ideas weakens the rationality of patrimonialism as the central organizing principle of Korean society, and he underestimates the creative roles of agency and culture in the historical change.

The optimistic pronouncement of the 'end of history' by Fukuyama and the pessimistic tone of Jacobs' patrimonialism are either premature or disabling because they reify the *status quo*, and simplify a complex, uneven and contradictory process. New configurations of culture, identity and society are manifestations of divergent patterns of modernity. In this vein, I want to develop the ideological critique of 'the end of history' and patrimonialism theses in an effort to identify an alternative narrative. I will then reintroduce Korean Shamanism and Confucianism to explore their role in the Korean cultural matrix.

1. Beyond particularism and universalism

(1) Against the only alternative: a critique of Francis Fukuyama's historicism

The main purpose of my discussion of Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis is to show why any universalization of social principles is not helpful to an understanding of a specific society. In my view, Fukuyama's argument is a myopic interpretation of modernity.¹ Fukuyama presumes that all social orders are subordinated to the 'meta-logic(s)' of modernity, which he reduces to modernization. The essential trajectory of modernization is seen as a converging development towards liberal democracy and capitalism. Fukuyama's coherent and directional History of humankind presupposes the identification of humankind with the seemingly Western man and the identification of history with the history of Western civilization. This kind of historicism can be viewed as scientifically nonsensical and morally dangerous, for it can lead to totalitarianism and the closing of the open society (see Popper 1961). My question here is whether state formation and modernization processes necessarily lead to liberal democracy and modern capitalism. Arguably, from a short-term perspective, Korea does not seem to follow the principles Fukuyama claimed are universal; in the long term, we cannot be certain of either the practical feasibility or the theoretical validity of the principles themselves.

Let me briefly sketch the outlines of Fukuyama's position. He argues that there are two developing tendencies in the world: the first development is 'the end of history'; the second is the steadily increasing technological sophistication of modern economies and societies (Fukuyama 1989: 3). He defines 'the end of history' as the convergence of all political and economic institutions toward a singular model

of liberal democracy and capitalism (1992: xii). For Fukuyama, history is understood as a singular, coherent and evolutionary process, rather than the multitude of events studied by historians. In this way, he seems to view history from a particular cosmopolitan perspective that rejects the historian's concern for continuous causation. History with a capital H is a sequence of stages of consciousness or ideology; that is, a sequence of systems of political belief that embody distinctive views about the basic principles underlying social order. The sequence represents a progressive and purposive path in human development, so 'the end of history' means that ideological conflict is over. Accordingly, liberalism is the last viable ideology in human history. Fukuyama argues that liberal democracy is now the only civil condition that will satisfy the aspirations of humankind. He defines history as 'man's search for a single universally congenial political system,' and in so doing reinterprets the Hegelian definition of history as 'the process of man to higher levels of rationality and freedom, which had a long terminal point in the achievement of absolute self-consciousness' (1992: 64).² He further argues that man's search seems to be nearing its end: Western-style democracy ended history after the collapse of Communism and the achievement of 'free' societies in the spaces formally occupied by tyrannies.

'The end of history' also means the completion of modernity. For Fukuyama, modernity is the outcome of two constitutive processes that have shaped the structures of modern history: technical-economic development in tandem with capitalism, and liberal democracy. Modern natural science regulates the direction of economic development by establishing a constantly changing horizon of production possibilities. The other mechanism is needed to understand the second thesis – why liberal democracy is the culmination of human aspirations in politics. Fukuyama finds an answer by connecting liberal democracy and the 'essential' human being in the state of nature, while disregarding contingencies of social existence and, indeed, peculiarities of the Western experience of liberalism. To support his thesis Fukuyama posits 'Universal History,' proposing a 'trans-historical' concept of human nature based on an ontological construct of the 'first man' whose characteristics are hypothesized and attributed as essential (1992: 138).³ He identifies Plato's part of the human soul, *thymos* (or spiritedness), with the 'struggle for recognition' noted by Hegel in the first man. Fukuyama claims that this *thymos* (which induces people to seek recognition for their own worth) is a quality as fundamental to the human essence as the two other factors – desire (which motivates the search for things outside of oneself) and reason (which reveals the best way to secure desired objects) (1992: 165, 182). *Thymos* is basically the universal desire to be recognized and valued (1992: 172, 177),⁴ which allows human beings to overcome their most powerful natural instincts in order to strive for what they believe is right and just, which is specified here as *isothymos* (1992: 187).

In Fukuyama's thesis, it is primarily in the West that this 'basic drive for recognition' has generated the progressive rational domination of nature and the rational articulation of political life that culminated in modern liberal democracy through the development from the classical and feudal worlds to the modern state.

Of particular interest is Fukuyama's thesis of universal historical development. How universal is his thesis and how relevant, to the real world? In spite of a professed belief in the political ideals of the West such as liberal democracy, and despite an eagerness to adopt them as their own (although not so in all cases), many countries have not fully succeeded in assimilating them or in creating a new synthesis with local cultural values and institutions. Having made up their mind in favor of things Western, especially since the Second World War, countries less developed or colonized have often impetuously rushed into the task of building a new political order that is selectively modeled after that of the West.

It is certainly true that a great number of countries have become more democratic over the past several decades. Yet we have also observed strong tendencies in the opposite direction; namely, towards some form of theocracy, especially in the Islamic world and Balkan states. The courses of political development being followed by the Asian and African countries have no exact parallel in the histories of developed countries.⁵ The 'underdeveloped' countries are not only proceeding today along a different path in their political development, they have also started out with a different beginning. It may be more appropriate to say that they are 'differently' developed rather than 'under'-developed; having started from a different situation, they are now following a different course of development, and can be expected to remain different. There is also a less-common reference point. When they use such phrases as freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law, we may fail to realize the fact that their linguistic equivalents for these concepts are of very recent coinage and thus void of the cultural content that makes their counterparts in the Western languages meaningful cultural symbols. These words could have acquired different connotations in their own cultural context.

The irreducible multiplicity of modernization is bound to produce conflicting interpretations that are open and incomplete. The search for modernity is a continuing one and is related to the evolving economic and social systems. At the same time, any liberal idea of the individual/society cannot be reduced to the limited categories of science and technology, or to finite social principles. The field of liberties demanded by humankind is much broader and far more extensive than Fukuyama envisages. We have to ask the question, 'what is history in the light of each country's own experience?'

Back to Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis, where does South Korea stand? Is it on the brink of the end of history? From Fukuyama's view, South Korea is still in the 'middle of history'; liberal democracy has yet to be fully developed. Moreover, the economy needs to develop further along liberal market principles. South Korea appears simultaneously overlapping the East-West tension and the North-South problem, even though Fukuyama presumes that the East-West problem was resolved with the collapse of the communist regimes.⁶ During the time of being 'out of history,' South Korea has also been 'out of power' in the world-system. Now it has moved closer to a position of sharing power with certain ruling countries; it has asserted its claim to the past and recovered its national pride following the successful reconstruction of the country after experiencing exploitative colonialism and a devastating civil war. While the Korean people

have been exhilarated by their economic achievement and want to identify themselves with post-industrial countries, they have to face both the 'first man's task' and the 'last man's idleness' at the same time.⁷

Fukuyama's thesis of 'the end of history' goes too far toward eradicating differences and homogenizing disparate national histories. By setting liberal democracy and capitalism off as something presupposed in all modern historical development, Fukuyama is imposing them as something we have to accept without question. In this sense, Fukuyama's use of the notion of 'mechanism' consists in universalizing one conventional type of reflection and excluding others.

In sum, I contend that Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis is thought provoking but applicable neither to human history as a whole, nor to the contemporary history of Korea in particular. His concepts of liberal democracy and the market system are neither rich nor nuanced enough to represent complex realities adequately. Reduced to its fundamentals, Fukuyama's argument is a shallow optimism preoccupied with a one-sided admiration of the forces of modernization. The principles of market and liberal democracy are used to stress similarities among different nations' experiences with modernization while minimizing the significance of the dissimilarities. This ahistorical method and abstract universalism rule out the impact of historical contingency while also assuming the superiority of more technologically advanced states. Fukuyama's work offers a version of the 'neoliberalist' rhetoric, but does not present intercultural relations between countries with enough complexity. Hence, while we can accept that liberal democracy and market capitalism have made important advances over the past decade, Fukuyama's stronger thesis about the end of history and his unilineal conception about paths to and through modernity must be rejected. In its place is needed a conception of modernity that stresses both the multiple paths to its realization, and the multidimensionality of the condition of modernity.

(2) *Patrimonialism and cultural identity*

In this section, I want to explore the inner mechanisms of cultural identity encapsulated in the Korean collective consciousness, as outlined in the patrimonialism framework proposed by Jacobs. In his book *The Korean Road to Modernization and Development* (1985), Jacobs tries to explain the Korean modernization process by reducing it to the single factor: patrimonialism.⁸ He explores the content of the social structure, focusing on a dynamic rather than static basis for social order while highlighting the continuity of culture and tradition in the development of successive political and social systems. In his analysis, Weberian patrimonial theory is used to show that the concept of patrimonialism is most applicable to social and political organization during various periods. It is also utilized to interpret contemporary political processes and social structure in South Korea.

The concept of patrimonialism is one subtype of Max Weber's three ideal types of domination. Here, patrimonialism is a form of rule under which power is autocratically wielded by a patriarch and administered through a personal staff.

While patrimonial concepts are typically used to explain processes of stabilization and stagnation in community systems, a Weberian view provides insights into power restructuring processes and emerging social, economic and political formations. Weber provides an alternative in his elaboration of the influence of various power structures (e.g. patrimonialism, feudalism, hierarchy) on modern capitalism, which can be used to explain the power-structural conditions of not only the development of modern capitalism but also socioeconomic change in general (Weber 1968: Chapter XIII). In Jacobs' framework, patrimonialism is the key feature of the political system in Korean society, while kinship and patron–client relationships are the fundamental units of social interaction.

Jacobs defines modernization as 'the introduction of novel means in order to improve a society's performance, but with the aim that those changes do not challenge, but rather reinforce, certain cherished goals and organizational procedures' (1985: 6). Development is defined as 'the maximization of the potential of a society regardless of the society's existing goals and organizational procedures' (1985: 6). From a historical perspective, Jacobs endeavors to explain why Korea has been modernized without development. According to Jacobs, the encounter of tradition with modernity through the colonial experience provided a variety of distinctive and conflicting conditions in Korean society, but without disturbing its patrimonial principles. Jacobs analyzes patrimonialism as a principle of social organization, explaining factionalism as 'multicentered patrimonialism' under which the locals have striven to create groups (factions) to represent their prebendary interests at the center (1985: 28–9).

For Jacobs, this kind of patrimonialism is the indigenous institutionalized social structure of Korea: not a cultural background but the basic structure of the socio-cultural world in Korean society. It is deeply embedded in Korean society and Koreans' social actions in spite of Japanese colonial rule (1910–45) and the American military occupation (1945–8). From his perspective, Korean society has been modernized, but this has only happened within a patrimonial framework. Patrimonialism, it is argued, is the major force responsible for the failure of development. Jacobs' model, however, does not explain how the shared culture and social structure of Korean society have been transformed during the process of modernization. He fails to recognize not only the nature and the role of the modern South Korean state, but also the interaction between modern structures and traditional culture, and human consciousness and social actions.

It is true that patrimonialism still operates in modern South Korea in various forms such as familism, nepotism, opportunism and regionalism. If patrimonialism determines social organization, as Jacobs says, does it also determine an elementary form of the constitution of Korean modernity? If Korea's tradition of patrimonialism has become the basis of the social structure of modern Korea, how and by which mechanisms has it been maintained in modern society? Does modernity mean absence of social structures such as patrimonialism?

To answer these questions we must consider the ways in which Korean patrimonialism was institutionalized in the Neo-Confucian tradition. In the aristocratic Choson society (1392–1910), where competition for access to political and

economic power was increasing, Neo-Confucianism provided the aristocracy with the means to maintain control of access to power through ritual prescriptions (Deuchler 1992). Relationships of domination and subordination in political and economic life were ultimately ordered on patrimonial principles. Discretionary grants of authority, and prerogatives from the superior to subordinates, operated through the recognition of patrimonial ties to the personal and primary group. In Jacobs' framework, people in a patrimonial social organization like Korea spend much time preserving the open-ended situational prebendal ties without development, whereas in feudal societies such as Western Europe and Japan, rights and privileges for individuals and social groups were legally defined, allowing these societies to reach their 'maximal potential' (i.e. development).

There is a close relationship between the patrimonial social structure and the Neo-Confucian tradition, which defined Korean society in a significant way. This linkage is, however, not fully analyzed in Jacobs' work. He focuses only on one functional dimension of Confucianism – creating and maintaining a patrimonial moral order. Moreover, he understates the importance of the post-Confucian value system on which patrimonial role expectations are reformulated. Jacobs explicitly states that he agrees with Henderson's thesis (1968) of the 'politics of the vortex': the political updraft towards the *center* and the political atomization of the masses. At the same time, he discusses the implications of 'cathartic renovation' in internal restructuring of social organization without giving up his fundamental patrimonial assumption: 'innovations were cathartic and hence renovating, and not institutionally qualitative in the development sense' (Jacobs 1985: 279). For Jacobs then, patrimonialism is the structural underpinning of the Korean political economy.

South Korea's remarkable economic performance cannot, however, be reduced to the institutional strategy of patrimonialism as Jacobs' explanation does (Hamilton and Biggart 1988).⁹ It is true that, in essence, the central role of state intervention in the market system was, and to a certain extent continues to be, patrimonial. The granting of subsidies by the authoritarian bureaucratic government generated corrupt business–government relations. This reinforces Jacobs' argument. However, the modern Korean state is strong enough to discipline firms and use market pressures selectively for the strategic exploitation of market opportunities with skillful interventions (Amsden 1989). This is determined more by economic rationality than by patrimonialism.

The patrimonial system of state–business relations was built under the Park regime, whose legitimacy depended heavily on economic performance. Hence, it tried to secure business cooperation. With economic development, the structural power of business over the state's policies has increased because of the strong industrial concentration. At the same time, the diversified nature of the Korean business enterprise (*chaebol*) itself exemplifies patrimonial characteristics. Its structure and management are obviously patrimonial: family connections, alumni ties and common regional origins are considered very important in most business groups. Rivalries between *chaebol* can become personal clan-based conflicts (Biggart 1990). Nevertheless, just as centralized control by an authoritarian state

is becoming less efficient and effective as a developmental strategy in the changing internal and external environment, so too is patrimonialism in the business sector (Chang and Choi 1988).

A review of contemporary political history of South Korea highlights the persistence of an 'authoritarian' rather than a 'patrimonial' state. This was possibly due to the overwhelming predominance of the military within the economic and political power elite during the military dictatorship. The military government nurtured a false dilemma between accelerated economic growth and participative civil life. Economic achievement is associated with state capacity and with the power of developmental institutions to supply conditions and services that are needed. The government operated a patronage-based system that included an unusual degree of organizational continuity between colonial and post-colonial administration. Nevertheless, the values sustained through modernization were favorable to bureaucratic role performance and organizational commitment as manifested in bureaucratic technocracy. In addition, the unusual economic growth and 'relative' political stability in South Korea could be seen as positively interacting. The transition to democracy has given way to a new political constellation that has propelled South Korea in the direction of increasing decentralization of power and finance and regional autonomy. The rise of a civil society, encompassing economic and political liberalization and social diversity, came to undermine the authoritarian governing mechanisms.

Jacobs' analysis pays little attention to the political and institutional context within which the modern South Korean state has internally adjusted to global and regional conditions. There is more than one simple patrimonial logic in South Korea's structural changes and adjustment towards an endless series of negotiations over reform conditions. In the process of modernization and state formation, both the economic and political self-interests of the ruling elites, and the hegemonic cultural frames that the ruling elite enacted and employed as ideology, must be examined. Patrimonialism is not only a traditional legacy but also one dimension of development strategies. Patrimonialism, along with different ideologies such as Neo-Confucianism and communitarianism, has served economic development, contrary to neoclassical economists' predictions. However, how it contributed to or obstructed the modernization of Korean society needs a more careful analysis.

In sum, Jacobs gives an expression of Korean images of social order and a distinctive form of modernity. As we have demonstrated, his analysis is too reductionist to elucidate the complex dynamics of discursive practice in Korea, undermining the hermeneutical matrix of patrimonialism itself. Patrimonial structures have been an important part of Korean society, but they are flexible – adaptable to new contexts and manipulable by new forces. In Murvar's (1985) comparison of modern and traditional patrimonialism, he argues that while patrimonialism has persisted over time, it has successfully utilized new technological advances to consolidate power and legitimacy. A synthesis of new realities and old patterns is reflected in social mobility and the changing configuration of elites. The contemporary political system combines elements of both its cultural heritage and

liberal ideology. Patrimonialism is only one face of modern Korea's multifaceted social structure, and different forms of neo-patrimonialism are continuously being constructed. Jacobs oversimplifies the schema of the process of Korean modernization by labeling Korean society as patrimonial. His understanding of Korean society is overshadowed by his conception of static patrimonialism. Korea as a transitional society needs a more accurate and comprehensive model(s) than a singular emphasis on patrimonialism, if we are to explain the emergence of a new form of social structure and cultural identity.

So far, I have criticized both Fukuyama's 'the end of history' and Jacobs's patrimonialism theses for their universalistic and particularistic discourse. Although their theories provide insights into the role of culture in modernity, their explanatory power is limited by their reliance on monolithic, reductionist ideal types in conceptualizing civilization. Fukuyama bases his argument on the liberal democracy, and Jacobs on patrimonialism. Against this background, a closer look at Korea's main cultural traditions is in order for a more adequate understanding of Korean modernity.

2. The core cultural traditions: Shamanism and Confucianism

(1) Korean Shamanism as a prototype of Korean culture

Korean Shamanism can be identified with indigenous Korean religious practices as well as the beliefs and life attitudes of the Korean people: practices and beliefs that provided a source of order in society and nature in Korea before the influx of Chinese civilization. In spite of its unstructured character, Korean Shamanism has survived into modern times and has influenced the Korean way of life in general and the Koreans' (sub)consciousness in particular. Although it has never been highly institutionalized as a systemic theory and practice, it was an omnipresent and adaptable component of culture, society and collective identity. One of the main reasons why Korean Shamanism has been able to survive along with other more refined and better organized religions – Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Christianity – can be found in its amorphousness: it is capable of reforming/reshaping itself under new social conditions where it faces new challenges (Hahm 1980). Korean Shamanism and other religions have affected one another and restructured their rituals and other features through intensive interaction. Korean Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism are more likely to be secular-oriented than sacred-oriented (Darling 1979: Chapter 2). While all these religions have both secular and sacred tendencies at the same time, Korean Shamanism has contributed to the secularization of other religions while adapting to their organized forms.¹⁰

Korean Shamanism as the primal religion is literally identified with the term 'Musok.' This suggests that it came originally from Siberia rather than from China (Lee 1981: 1–5). In its Korean form, this religion involved polyspiritism, it recognized the pervasive presence of the divine in more than one single form.

It gradually developed more significant divine images through the legends and myths of its origin and formation. As can be seen in the myth of Tangun, which deals with the foundation of the Korean nation, Shamanistic influence may be found in the indigenous belief in a supreme heavenly spirit called *Hanullim* (Grayson 1989; Lee 1981). This traditional faith seemed to deteriorate under the influence of magic and popular cults of Taoism, which came to Korea in the middle of the seventh century. Furthermore, from the time Korea adopted Buddhism as the state religion in the fourth century, Korean Shamanism gradually lost its power over public rituals, and declined into private rituals for family well-being.

How did Korean Shamanism survive this marginalization? The answer is to be found in the historical and cultural contexts. Confucianism and Taoism were received and incorporated into the Korean culture. Their Korean versions are different from their Chinese originals. Buddhism was also introduced into China, but the manner in which Buddhism developed in the two countries, and especially the social reactions to Buddhism, were quite different. Buddhism and Confucianism played a significant role as popular religions, as well as the state religion at different times. In the meantime, Korean Shamanism contributed to the 'indigenization' of the foreign religions and bridged the gap between different religious traditions. Grayson, in *Korea: A Religious History*, summarizes the influence of Shamanism as follows: 'Shamanism was to form the spiritual and intellectual basis upon which all later religious traditions would be built' (Grayson 1989: 271).

In terms of cultural conditions, the essence of Korean Shamanism is expressed in some form in the daily life of communities. There are many different kinds of rituals with their own unique characteristics. Each village has its own peculiar mores, different gods and different forms of rituals. It is not difficult in this context to conjecture that this polytheist tradition of Shamanism led to tolerance in the process of interaction with other religions. These various Shamanistic rituals have been central to the constitution and reproduction of culture and social structure. Despite its vulnerability and adaptability, the traditional faith in Korean Shamanism has endured and become a central part of the ethos of Korean society. What are its key components?

In Korean Shamanism, the notion of absolute truth and goodness is denied. Everything is placed on a continuum, which has already existed before human history began and will continue to exist. For the Shamanist only the present (this world) has meaning, and everything can change depending on the vicissitudes of society and nature. In Korean Shamanism, humans are humans, things are things and nature is nature. While they ceaselessly interact, one is not allowed to dominate another. Rather, they coexist and complement one another. Every form of existence has its own position and role in relation to the others. There is a chain of cause and effect, but the overall picture is that of unbounded 'contingent' connection. Even though individual elements are fused into the central power of the 'assumed collectivity' in human relations, it does not mean a total negation of individual autonomy.

The origins of Korean Shamanism are prehistoric and thus difficult to determine. It has neither a founder nor an official scripture. The belief was not created

by any one individual, but developed around the family and village community, intimately connected with the relevant mountainous environment. Many deities are still enshrined and worshipped in the family and village, such as the guardian god of the home site, the tutelary spirit of a house site, the ancestors and the god of the kitchen (Chang 1981; Kendall 1985). After Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism were introduced from China, most Shamanistic rites were re-established in villages as a part of their own folk religion in connection with their own secret space. By the time Koreans began to identify themselves as a separate and distinctive people sharing a common culture, Shamanism already existed. It can still be viewed as a form of collective (sub)consciousness, regulating individual thinking within a system of collective representation. In other words, Korean Shamanism forms part of a cosmology embedded in Korean collective (sub)consciousness. It is not a particularly differentiated world-view like many other religions. It cannot be described in terms of particular concepts or a systemic logic. Yet through ritual action Korean Shamanism continues to play an essential role in restoring the connection not only between the sacred and secular (this role can be applied to other religions as well), but also between the individual and collective, the subjective and objective, and culture and structure.

However, Korean Shamanism has also been modified and instrumentalized over time. While the power of rituals appears to have diminished in modern times, it still remains in the Korean (sub)consciousness in a transformed mode. Korean Shamanism has not entirely disappeared from modern Korean society. This largely eclipsed tradition still exists in a diluted form even though it has never been systematized in the way other religions have been, or achieved political power through a particular group. It has become part of the Korean people's logic, including both rational and non-rational elements in social action. This may be one of the most important reasons why the process of modernization of Korean society is different from that of other countries. Politics and technology can in effect be driven from underlying 'universal' principles, and can be implemented successfully without too much regard for the details of history, or emphasis on the nature of the community. The structure of socio-cultural logic, however, reflects in some way a characteristic attitude of a life whose underlying concepts, customs and forms of life may still differ profoundly.

The argument above suggests that the importance of Korean Shamanism has been under-appreciated. This is largely because of its lack of potential for mass politics. In the turbulent course of Korean history, Shamanism penetrated the folklore that reflects a *han*-ridden mind of cultural identity.¹¹ When the traditional religions and ideologies deteriorated and were not capable of responding to the extremely difficult situation in the nineteenth century, the new religious movement, Tonghak, emerged, giving hopes to a despairing population. At that time, elements taken from popular beliefs and thinking related to the practices of Shamanism played an important role in this religion. Presenting itself as supported by divine omnipotence, Tonghak provided a new and fresh doctrine that 'men are divine' and, therefore, that all men are equal.¹² Korean Shamanism also contributed to social movements in modern Korea by helping to form a national

identity based on an ideology of *minjung* (mass or people) who are suffering and struggling for popular collectivity.

In sum, Korean Shamanism has been an important vehicle for the enduring continuity of socio-cultural identity, which has been quite fundamental in the formation of the Korean nation. Because of its unique vitality and amorphous characteristics, Korean Shamanism may continue to function and reproduce itself in the conditions that now affect Korean cultural identity.

(2) Neo-Confucianism as a double-edged sword

Confucianism, as one of the most important cultural loci and legacies in East Asia, has heavily influenced the social consciousness and cultural orientations of the majority of Koreans for many centuries. Along with other religions in contemporary Korea, Confucianism, with no independent, structured organization of its own, still plays a dominant role in everyday life and in the ethical and moral life in particular. In the Confucian conception of the ethics of daily life, the clear-cut boundary between religion and ethics hardly exists. Confucianism has endured as a system of thought, ethics and principles of governance since the fourth century.¹³ While its religious influence on Korean society was not decisive in the early stages, its political and educational function has been uninterrupted. It eventually replaced Buddhism as the most important transmitter of Chinese culture and cultural practices into Korea.

From the fourth century until the end of Koryo (372–1392), Buddhism greatly contributed to a wide-ranging transmission of Chinese culture into Korea while providing national spiritual unity. How then did Confucianism take over the position that Buddhism had held for over ten centuries, and begin to exercise a more predominant influence over the whole society? Furthermore, why have the concepts of orthodoxy and social prestige, which have been handed down from Confucianism, been kept alive in the structure of Korean consciousness even to the present day, despite the fact that it could not effectively face the numerous challenges from Western values and new scientific knowledge in the late nineteenth century?

The transmission of Confucianism into Korea, the formation of Korean Neo-Confucianism in early Choson and the rise of Neo-Confucianism as an ideology enhancing economic development in modern South Korea, are all closely related to the social and cultural changes during the period of transformation that was in search of a unifying and stabilizing ideology. In this context, Deuchler (1992) argues that, through a reconstruction of the social and kinship structure of the Koryo period, Neo-Confucianism became the ideological foundation of a new state system. More recently, there has been some argument about the role of the Confucian tradition in the process of modernization in East Asia. While some have argued that the Confucian traditions are incompatible with democratic or socialistic ideas or with 'modernity,' the examples of industrial East Asia suggest that their rapid industrialization owes something to the adaptation of (neo) Confucian values such as respect for authority, social solidarity based on

familism, prioritization of education and meritocratic norms (Berger and Hsin-Huang 1988).

If the Neo-Confucian cultural tradition has adapted a new life, what then does it offer to Koreans today? Given the conspicuous contradictions in its conservative teaching in regard to modern democratic, liberal and capitalist society, by whom and on what rationale can the 'essential' values in its doctrine be rebuilt in contemporary society? I will first briefly examine the ways in which Neo-Confucianism applied or contributed to social and political changes during the transformative phases of Korean history. This may help explain why Neo-Confucianism failed as an ethical standpoint in the face of values associated with modernity, yet retained relevance for a sense of belonging and collective identity in modern Korean society.

When examining the religious history of Korea, one important question to ask is why the hegemony of Confucianism in *Choson* (1392–1910) was far stronger than that of Buddhism in *Silla* (356–935) and *Koryo* (936–1391). Confucianism, like other religions in different societies, was ideologically interpreted and used by the elite aristocracy. Similarly, Neo-Confucianism was used as a tool to reform/transform Korea's social structure, especially in the transition period from the end of *Koryo* to the beginning of *Choson*. A similar case can be found in modern South Korea. The military regime continued to use the remnants of Confucian traditions for its own ends by legitimizing an elitist, meritocratic and authoritarian style of leadership.

Neo-Confucianism refers to an intellectual movement that aimed to reconstruct the original Confucian teachings during the Sung dynasty (960–1279) (Helman 1988: 93–4). It represents an attempt to institutionalize the main symbolic tenets of Confucianism to reorder society and polity in a vision of harmony. Given the historical background of the disintegration of *Koryo* society, which was regarded as having something to do with Buddhism, it seemed plausible to Korean scholars to accept Neo-Confucianism as a new ideology for social change. As a result of the actions of the early Neo-Confucian scholarly officials, who were keen to expand their economic and political power, Korean culture changed from being a predominantly Buddhist society to a culturally and philosophically Neo-Confucian society, with a long period of resistance from common people (Rozman 1991). Deuchler, in *The Confucian Transformation of Korea* (1992), argues that the main ideological implication of Neo-Confucianism was structural change in the kinship system: from the 'cognatic' descent system which had strong elements of both the patrilineal and the matrilineal systems of the *Koryo* dynasty, into an exclusively 'patrilineal' lineage system which emphasized the maintenance of the central line of the *Choson* dynasty. The adoption of this system had a paramount influence on all sectors of Korean society: agnatic structure and ancestor worship, mourning and funeral rituals, inheritance rights, education and the social status of women. Within the framework of Neo-Confucian ethics, new cultural codes for everyday living were legitimized and promoted as the code of conduct, while at the same time marginalizing all other ways. A crucial part of this cultural transformation was the process of moral regulation in which the powerless, particularly women,

were indoctrinated and regulated by 'the hidden curriculum' which shaped morality.

The Korean Neo-Confucian scholarly officials used their doctrine, centered around the 'religious imagination' of ancestor worship, as a framework for the reconstruction of kinship on the model of a patrilineal lineage system. They ritualized the ancestral cult as status symbols, canonized Confucian texts and monopolized the education system, thereby legitimizing their morality and social status, and thus perpetuating their political and social power. Through ritual, Korean society was Confucianized, and the social institutions were differentiated according to Confucian orthodoxy. Neo-Confucianism altered the Korean social structure with the institutionalization of Confucian doctrine as state orthodoxy. This undoubtedly had multiple effects on Korean society. While Neo-Confucianism in the transitional periods provided a new socio-political order on the basis of a moral vision, the project of 'Back to the Classic Model,' however, has turned out to be a failure. The reasons for this, while complex, had to do with the power struggle among the scholarly officials (Helman 1988).¹⁴ Since the middle centuries of the Choson dynasty, factionalism, regarded as one of the political legacies of Confucianism, brought tensions and disjuncture between moral virtue and political power. Confucian orthodoxy served to define, contain and transfigure the process of social differentiation. The Choson Neo-Confucian scholarly officials were deeply occupied with philosophical and political discourses, ignoring significant economic and social issues.¹⁵

In considering the character of the Confucian legacy in Korean society, we cannot deny its impact on Korean society as a whole, and especially its effects on the formation of Korean cultural identity. In Korea, Confucianism was both more culturally dominant and more ideologically utilized than elsewhere in the region. (Neo) Confucianism presupposes that the nature of humans is good. It is not interested in the abstract Being itself, but rather in the way to a full development of the good nature in human beings. In Confucianism, a genuinely perfect person can develop only by cultivating his inherent natural qualities as conceptualized by the system of virtues: Jen (benevolence), Chin (wisdom), Yung (courage) and Li (ritual conduct). The realization of these ethical qualities, however, is by no means achieved at the isolated individual level. The full realization of Confucian virtues is contingent upon an individual's responsibility toward others, society and nature. What Confucius himself and (neo) Confucian scholars assumed as ideal social relations for a harmonized society were hierarchically differentiated relationships.

Norbert Elias shows that in court society, the ethos of rank is a reflection of a power-laden self-image or self-experience (Elias in Mannell 1990: 155–6). During the Choson period, the small elite group of Neo-Confucian scholars reconstituted themselves as a scholar-official class and separated from the rest of society by monopolizing Confucian education and ritualizing the descent system. Neo-Confucian Korean society was an aristocratic class society, in which hereditary and monopolistic access to power, wealth and knowledge by the minority was morally justified. The process of social stratification was based on 'voluntarily constructed' or 'self-imposed' relationships that presupposed a 'fixed' role, with

authority proceeding from the top to the bottom. This process was an ideologically driven division of labor, rather than a natural or spontaneous one. Significantly, the wider culture has usually been defined preeminently in relation to the ruling elite of the society. Because of this, we cannot dismiss the important role of Neo-Confucianism in the systematic transformation of whole groups of people by means of authority and discipline.¹⁶ These methods are regarded as effective because they are, in theory at least, based on relations of authority rather than relations of power. With the Confucian notion of universalistic virtues, Neo-Confucian Korean society was ruled by the authority of moral power, not by the authority of law.¹⁷

We may then ask the following question: how much of what we know or are told about the Korean Confucian tradition is really achieved in practice? Or was it really just an ideal? It might be said that, in the unitary religion of Korea, rites retain a Shamanistic tradition even though the ethics are Confucian. Kaji Nobuyuki shares this idea and argues, 'The Confucian ceremony of summoning spirits and restoring them to life is essentially Shamanism' (1991: 59). He points out that the Confucian concepts of filial piety and ancestor worship originally embraced Shamanistic notions of death and time. In Shamanism, death is not the end of life, but a continuum of existence through the lives of one's kindred, so there exists no discernible boundary of past, present and future. This is the reason why for both the Shamanist and the Confucian, kinship/lineage has a religious significance, and the family is the fundamental social unit and the moral and ethical basis of society. After Neo-Confucian rituals were adopted into public ceremonies, however, Neo-Confucianism prevented men from participating in Shamanistic rites. Therefore, there is a differentiation of responsibility in the ritual role: women played the main role for the Shamanistic rites and men for the Confucianized ancestor worship (Chang 1981).

The dominance of Neo-Confucianism over life was so complete that Choson Korea emerged as the most thoroughly Confucian society in East Asia, with Confucian doctrines more strictly imposed than in China itself, even though other religions (Korean Shamanism, Taoism, Buddhism) still remained parts of a syncretic religious culture. One of the main reasons why Neo-Confucianism triumphed over Buddhism and other religions for some five hundred years is the fact that its basic tenets were based upon social relationships grounded between the members of a family. As mentioned above, the strong bond between family members continues unbroken through generations, and has been the supreme value of Korean culture. What was different about Choson Korea from other eras is the way the power elite interpreted the family bond (or kinship). The early Choson Neo-Confucian scholarly officials reorganized the social structure with a change of the lineage system. The characteristics of the descent system were transformed and transmuted through rituals and the reconstructed social relations reinforced by ceremonies: the power of rituals was transformed into the power of an elite aristocracy in the process of legitimation.

Thanks largely to Neo-Confucianism, family consciousness is a fundamental asset in the fabric of Korean culture even today. Ancestor ceremony, a typical

example of symbolic expressions of family cohesion, plays a great role in reunifying members of scattered kin-groups living in different places. In Neo-Confucianism, where priority is given to family kinship, moral values come from the stratified age-set, dwelling place (region), and lineal dignity, with each performing a very significant function in regulating social life. The Korean language itself reflects this social morality, because it makes much use of honorifics: in different situations, people speak very differently, denoting respect and disrespect. Choice of language indicates situational awareness and a relationship.

Along with other East Asian societies, such as China and Japan, Korea has been regarded as being representative of a collectivist culture. Rozman defines some qualities of group relations in East Asian cultures as 'familism,' drawing attention to the extraordinary preoccupation with family solidarity and interests (1991b: 30). Despite the said group-oriented tendency of the Korean people acting on a common value system, there exists a relatively weak form of 'mass politics' in Korean society, in the sense of communal or national solidarity. The essence of Korean group cohesion has rather more to do with the effect of Neo-Confucian orthodoxy: one that has been labeled 'self-defensive conservatism.' Ritualized social relationships make members of organizations 'submerged' within the organization, showing their confirmed loyalty without seeking any alternative values. At the expense of self-interest, the Korean in-group members tend to emphasize 'one-ness' or 'whole-ness,' by which one is identified as a member of the group rather than as an autonomous individual (Choi and Choi 1994: 57–84). This collective or 'grouping' tendency is another effect of Neo-Confucianism, arising from the emphasis on the importance of harmony and order.¹⁸

If we accept the premises that cultural traditions are reflected in social practices and that they regulate, express and transform the human psyche, then Korean Neo-Confucianism has successfully penetrated both the intellectual and emotional dimensions of Korean life. Byung Tai Hwang, in his doctoral thesis, *Confucianism in Modernization* (1979), compared the different responses to modernization of China, Japan and Korea in terms of the Confucian cultural legacy. He based the distinctions upon how each society accepts and applies Confucian doctrines to its own historical conditions: China as a cultural system, Japan as a cultural ideology and Korea as a cultural tradition. As he points out, the in-built cultural orientation of Korean Confucianism remains even now as a cultural ethos, value system and world-view beyond the ethical–political domain.

If this is so, what has been the role of Neo-Confucianism in the process of modernization in Korean society? As far as the dramatic economic development during the last few decades is concerned, the question is difficult to answer. This is partly because of the intrinsic contradictions of Confucian doctrine itself and partly because of the incompatible value orientations in Confucian tradition and the spirit of capitalism. It is also partly because of other factors – such as institutional ones – that we cannot ignore in explaining the process of modernization (Park 1992). In addition, before accepting the argument that the Confucian ethic has contributed to South Korea's economic development in modern times, the major impact of Christianity and the economic consequences of Korea's colonial

experience should also be taken into account. Nevertheless, it seems plausible to think that there is a compatible relationship between Confucianism and capitalism (Chan 1996; Clark and Roy 1997). Paradoxically, the compatibility lies in the radical manner in which the state has sought to use tradition as a resource that could be harnessed in the development process. In other words, the government efficiently exploited Neo-Confucianism, which was accumulated as the cultural and social capital of the past, utilized for purposes of the present.

Here it can be stated that the main rationales behind Neo-Confucianism in the Choson dynasty and in modern Korea do not necessarily combine or reflect the actual historical reality as a superstructure in a Marxian sense. Neo-Confucianism was only partly exploited as a tool for manipulating 'false consciousness' by which the 'real' could be invented. So, one can argue that the Confucian influences found in Korea are not truly Confucian. Rather, they represent a misinterpreted and perhaps somewhat perverted Confucianism. What then do we mean by 'true' Confucianism? How much does what we know today as Confucianism have to do with the thoughts of Confucius? When we mention 'Neo-Confucianism,' 'Post-Confucianism' (Lu 1997) and 'Industrial-Confucianism' (Vogel 1991), there is a considerable distance from 'authentic' Confucianism.

If Confucianism is composed of 'significations' of our imagination, and if the significations are 'institutionalized' through rituals for political ends, is it anything less than a political ideology grounded upon metaphysics and religion (Castoriadis 1987)? Within the ideology of Confucianism in various forms, there exists the logic of domination and manipulation of various cultural traditions. While this ideology has been a source of cultural identity, it has also been a source of cultural bondage for both the individual and society. The manifestations of Confucianism are so strong that the imaginary significations of Confucianism seem to be inscribed in Korean society. Considering the normative potential inherent in human reason, however, is it not possible to create a more humanistic and emancipatory form of Confucianism?

(3) *A synthesis*

As I have sought to explain, while there are many religions in Korea, the largest portion of Korean values were derived from Confucianism, especially in the areas of human and social relationships. In addition, there is a Shamanistic underpinning in these values. Of the many religions, Korean Shamanism and Confucian cultural elements have shaped Koreans the most. To Koreans, the concept of self derives from family or kinship.¹⁹ In this culture, submission to norms is more important than submission to reason: to follow social norms of behavior is to reach a level of sacredness, i.e. the will of Heaven (or *Tao*) (Hahm, C. 1998).

As Arnason (1989a: 28) sees it, if imaginary significations are defined as representing a surplus meaning that transcends all determinants, foundations and presuppositions, they can challenge the inherited ways of thinking and open a new horizon for interpreting culture.²⁰ It implies the potentiality for 'radical reinvention' of the Confucian imaginary. The question is how might the Koreans

make positive use of their cultural resources to attain the ideal society envisioned in Confucianism?

Thomas Merton, a Christian monk, shows us such potential in Confucianism. For Merton the Confucian vision of reality is 'contemplative awareness' in which he finds a preordained wholeness imprinted indelibly in the heart of a person at birth – the innate goodness of each human. Merton is faithful to the 'genuine' thought of Confucius (and Mencius) in seeing at the core of Confucianism a universally conceived personalistic philosophy which goes far beyond statecraft or political ideology. Merton believes, as did Confucius, in the power of ritual to bring insight to the human heart: 'rituals mean not only a fulfillment of personal and social duties but also a full expression of human and natural love which is the only genuine guarantee of peace and unity in society, and which produces that unity not by imposing it from outside but by bringing it out from within men themselves' (Merton 1967: 52).²¹

Merton's point is insightful when we consider the significance of rituals in Korean cultural identity: rituals are how people live, abiding by manners and etiquette. As such, as Elias echoes, they become part of the psyche. In Korea, people have experienced a loss of cultural identity, traceable to colonialism, the spread of the Western ideas and values, and a rise in the material living standard. The rediscovery or reinvention of cultural identity then becomes a legitimation strategy. The significance of Confucian values in connection with the founding of a modern Korean identity cannot be underestimated.

This does not simply mean 'going back' to Confucian cultural tradition, nor confining Korea's horizons to Confucian ethics. As Ren (1998) finds, in an analysis of the background to the 'Chinese Traditional Studies Heat' in the 1990s, the Chinese intellectuals' effort to legitimize their role in the rebuilding of a humane society against modern forces, especially the market economy, gave rise to the secularization and vulgarization of the life-world. This goes beyond a mere 'statecraft' idea that attempts to save the world through better government. Through the creation of new values wherein both righteousness and material gain can coexist, as Bonnin and Chevrier (1991) argue, a diversity of intellectuals is embraced, and technocratic intellectuals serve the state; and on the other hand, intellectuals with an autonomous base in society serve the interests of society. In the same vein, Cho mentions the Confucian tradition of civil society in which Confucian *literati* played 'the role of social leaders for the local communities,' while Confucian *officials* operated for the state only as bureaucrats (1996: 113).²² As Cho argues, Koreans can draw upon the Confucian heritage of civil society to defend Korean society against the state and the market.

In the Korean civilizational context, it is conceivable that Confucian imaginary significations might provide ground for a creative modernization and provide necessary social and ecological balance for it. This is possible provided we acknowledge that the potential of the Confucian tradition is open to imaginary creation in spite of its institutional constraints and historical contingencies.²³ This means a new combination of modernity and traditional values; values that have been neglected in the course of economic development. It also means a struggle

to rediscover or reconstruct the special characteristics of individual selves, as well as of the nation.²⁴

In sum, the distinctiveness of Korean civilization can be found in the broader context of an East Asian civilizational complex, in which Korea has encountered other civilizations, together with its historical trajectories and geopolitical constellations. I have explained the Korean religious traditions and socio-political structures within Korean civilization. Applying a concept of modernity both to the long *durée* patterns of civilizations and to the particular country or culture, I have reflected on the historical legacies of Korean civilization as a factor in shaping the patterns of Korean modernity. Part II will now apply these findings to Korea's tumultuous experience of modern state formation.

Part II

State formation

3 State formation in post-colonial Korea

1. The theoretical background

In recent years, significant scholarly effort has been devoted to understanding the tumultuous changes in Korea since the Korean War. Of particular interest has been the role and significance of the state in South Korea's spectacular economic growth. A range of theoretical perspectives and models has been employed to analyze the relationship between the South Korean state and economic development. These include the modernization theory, dependency theory, a 'bureaucratic authoritarian' model of the transition from authoritarian rule, and a 'democratic consolidation' model (Cotton 1989, 1995; Diamond and Plattner 1996; Huntington 1991a,b; Friedman 1994; Haggard and Kaufman 1995; Helgesen 1998).

The theoretical shifts over the years in the development of these different theories and models indicate the vagaries of intellectual production, and the changing realities of South Korea's political and economic development. The apparent ubiquity of the South Korean state has made it a central focus in these theoretical efforts. As Hagen Koo points out, the state is the most critical variable for explaining virtually all major aspects of historical change in Korea in the twentieth century (1993: 11). Although they are analytically separable, the processes of modernization and state formation in South Korea are largely coterminous. This being so, it is necessary, as a prelude to my discussion of the South Korean state, to discuss first some general observations of the relationship between the state and 'civil society' – which I use to refer to all those institutions (cultural, social and economic) that fall outside the formal administrative boundaries of the state apparatus.

The degree of a state's autonomy and its capacity to formulate and implement policies vary independently with the particular stage that a state has reached in its development. This development is not determined solely by factors internal to the state, but also by its relationship with civil society. This relationship is often characterized by a more or less permanent dynamic tension between the conflicting imperatives of civil society and the state, notwithstanding the propensity of the former to direct the latter and the latter to stand above and have authority over the former. Many discussions on the patterns of state intervention in the modernization process have not paid enough attention to this important relationship.

South Korea's process of state formation since the Second World War is an enticing case study. I will begin by briefly examining some sociological accounts of the state formation, and the historical background to Korean economic and political development. I will then identify the key historical turning points in the history of Korean state formation and, on the basis of that, provide a more coherent account of state formation in South Korea.

(1) The 'civilizing process' and state formation

Norbert Elias' analysis of state formation in Western Europe provides a useful point of reference for understanding the process of state formation in other contexts. Elias places the process of state formation at the center of a long-term civilizing process. Civilization is defined by Elias as a process in which the inner history of emotional life, the formation of the state, the development of bureaucracy and the inner pacification of society are linked by the 'sociological mechanisms of integration and differentiation' (1982: 88).

Observing the political structure of the medieval European Court and its changing socio-historical conditions, Elias demonstrates how the changes in political, social and economic structures required a broad series of cultural and psychological changes. He provides a picture of an intricate network of social relationships, which were in a fluid state in the early stages of the civilizing process. It enables one to identify continuity and discontinuity between medieval and modern societies, and to the roots of modern capitalism, state formation, the modern concept of privacy and personality structure in the so-called Middle Ages.

In the second volume of *State Formation and Civilization*, Elias highlights the power struggles – centered on the right to levy taxes and raise armies – between kings and other nobles in medieval Western Europe (1982: 201–25). Once the monarchs monopolized taxing power and violence, the warrior nobles were reduced to courtiers and bureaucrats. According to Elias, this consolidation of royal authority in a single individual led in the long run not to autocracy, but to the depersonalization and democratization of the exercise of power (1982: 198–201). Centralization and functional differentiation created an immense human web of dependence and interdependence, and brought about a crucial change in the structure of social relations.

The state's monopoly of violence, Elias claims, led to certain psychological repercussions. Individuals were deprived of hitherto socially acceptable outlets for aggressive impulses, which forced them to learn how to control their emotions. Furthermore, increasing interdependence brought about greater functional differentiation and required increasing foresight, more complex self-discipline and a more stable super-ego formation. In short, the transformation of the social structure called for a transformation of personality structures. The new code of manners, formerly only relevant to classes at the top of the social ladder, came to be internalized as moral imperatives for a far broader range of social classes.

The internalization of social constraints helped establish the distinction between the public and private spheres. As the rise of the modern state differentiated the

political from the economic realm, a split between an intimate and a public sphere was created, reinforced by – but also creating an impetus for – the emerging notion of ‘shame’ (Elias 1982: 292–7). The ancient concept of politics, embedded in an ethical project for a good public life, began to decline and fade. The new realm of the private increasingly subsumed the ethical sphere. The substitution of internal controls for external ones reflected and consolidated this growth of a distinct private sphere. Privatization and internalization in turn led to the transformation of private power, formerly held by individual rulers, into public power. In other words, the creation of a monopoly of power in the private person of the individual ruler was increasingly displaced by its investment and dispersal in the public institution of the state.

Elias places state formation in Western Europe in the context of a long-term civilizing process where the separations of the private from the public sphere, and the functional differentiation of the latter, maintained by a monopoly of taxation and legitimate violence, are viewed as essential. This integration of power structures and the broader social context is one of the hallmarks of Elias’s theoretical approach. It provides an excellent point of reference for examining state formation under different historical conditions.

Elias’s analysis, however, is not without problems. In linking socio-political and psycho-cultural changes, Elias seems to have underestimated the importance of the political role of the Church in the process of state formation. Given that the medieval church was invested with tremendous socio-political power, and was also one of the major politico-economic actors, Elias seems to have paid little attention to the relationship between the Church and the Court, and to its influence on medieval society as a source of both conflict and cohesion. Notwithstanding this weakness, Elias’s analysis is an important contribution to our understanding of state formation.

Arnason develops Elias’s interpretative paradigm of state formation and civilizing process, and expands it to a comparative analysis of the state formation process in a different civilizational context: Japan. Arnason conceptualizes five main dichotomies in the state formation process: primary versus secondary; autonomous versus dependent; endogenous versus derivative; immanent versus transformative; unitary versus composite (1996: 54–61).¹ This theoretical framework is useful for identifying the main features of state formation. Although Arnason uses it to contrast West European state formation with that of Japan, it provides a powerful framework for the analysis of other cases of state formation.

In the case of post-colonial South Korea, we see complex patterns of state formation processes. First, it is a mixture of a secondary process and the perpetuation of a primary process, where the state has been rebuilding into a modern form, while, at the same time, maintaining some continuity from its colonial legacies. Second, these processes begin in the dependent and derivative patterns, but develop autonomous and endogenous features as the state expands its integrative capacities and capitalist accumulation in the modernization process. Post-colonial state formation in South Korea exhibits the maximization of Elias’s ‘elementary mechanisms’ – the monopoly of taxation and violence – and a transition from an incompetent to a competent developmentalist state.

Third, it is immanent and at the same time, transformative. The modern South Korean state inherited the legacy of an authoritarian state. The capacity of the state to combine traditional and modern resources manifests in a developmentalist state model whose effect on the society is far-reaching and durable. The South Korean state utilizes the important preconditions and components of cultural traditions to direct industrialization. In particular, Neo-Confucianism was criticized and at the same time reinterpreted in such a way that it contributed to the development of power structures, which in turn accelerated the modernization process (i.e. an authoritarian bureaucratic state). Finally, the South Korean state is a highly centralized unitary regime, in the sense that it is systematically embedded in society. At the same time, it has residual composite elements in terms of geopolitical position. South Korean state formation is and has been open to the vicissitudes of domestic and international economic and political processes, while also being shaped by relatively autonomous processes endogenous to the state itself. It is these conflicting attributes that define the modern South Korean state.

(2) State formation and modernity

To what can we attribute the emergence of a modern state? How is it related to Korean modernity? The modern imaginary must be configured through self-reflexivity within the boundary of modernity. The epoch of modernity is distinguished by the prevalence of subjectivity and individuality. The dialectical faces of the sociological notion of the subject and the anthropological extension of this notion to the 'other' are different aspects of modernity's self-representation. The conditions that made this modern psychological structure possible can be defined by other characteristics that come from different parts of society but still constitute a collective image of a whole. As Elias explains, there are several aspects to this process such as monopoly, integration, differentiation, interdependence and internalization (1982: 319–33). These factors are a product not only of social structures, but also of conscious human activities as sources of social change. The more absolute the monarch's power and the more bureaucratic the form of political organization, the more complicated the social relations became. Modernity embodies a dichotomous tension between the power of rationalization and the subject's contesting of that power in search of its new identity.

The development of a capitalist bourgeoisie in Western Europe is one of the primary instigators of modern society. Political and economic upheavals in medieval society engendered the emergence of political states out of the diffused structures of feudalism, and of religious pluralization and secularization out of the universality of medieval Catholicism. These changes were associated with changes in social relationships, accompanied by change in modes of thought, attitude and behavior. The awareness of self and other, which began to develop under medieval court society, was manifested in a new bourgeois sensibility. With the development of cities and an increasing circulation of merchandise and money, the agrarian collective identity was destroyed. Identity centered on personal loyalty and kinship ties transformed in the face of political and economic changes.

In its place, the subject was constituted and the growth of social differentiation served to highlight individuality. The very notion of self as a differentiated subject, i.e. as a locus of private experience and initiator of action, was constructed along with the growth of a rational capitalism.

Here, the nation-state played a very important role in consolidating a new form of identity, one with its roots in traditional cultural soil. Once social and personality structures crystallized, a consolidating nation-state accumulated more information and knowledge in order to intervene more effectively in social processes. The enormous accumulation of information and knowledge, and the associated transformation of experience, were ultimately linked to the centralization of political power and the expansion and differentiation of the European economy (Anderson 1983).

Under the aegis of an expanding nation-state, imagined solidarity was achieved through formal and impersonal categories. The nation-state came to be imagined as a collective historical actor. In this sense, the emergence of individuated selfhood and the nation-state reinforced each other. At the interface of the transition from feudal society to modern society, the European nation-state gave expressions of the specific interests of certain social actors, generated under the historical conditions arising out of the capitalist economy and bourgeois society. New forms of cultural hegemony enabled the incorporation of the masses into symbolic communities that legitimated the new elites and mobilized the masses for emancipatory politics. Through the ideological screen of nationalism, the nation-state reproduced the fiction of a homogeneous national community in order to represent itself as being neutral and autonomous, and continuous through time.

The nation-state provided the organizational framework for a new representation of collective identity. Whereas the differentiation and rationalization of different areas of life, resulting from technological progress and the expansion of mass communication, were increasingly organized by the nation-state, responsibility for the constitution of the person as a subject was relegated to the private sphere. In the context of rapid social differentiation, the administrative needs of the state required the extension of the private sphere and the associated construction of the ideology of individualism.

However, the growth of individualism on the one hand and a centralized state on the other had contradictory consequences.² The growing administrative structures of the state often conflicted with private interests which were increasingly dependent on collective solutions, but not always attainable through the state. It was under these conditions that civil society emerged as a sphere distinct from the state. The expanded sphere of the social, presuming more abstract social relationships on the basis of symbolic and communicative characteristics, generated a public sphere with a transformed notion of the collective in a formal opposite position to private interests. This formal opposition of the public sphere or the state to private interests is also extant in non-Western state development.

The logic of nation-state building informed by modernity is inextricably bound to the founding of politics on the basis of a dissociation of the public from the private, rights from needs, and reason from passion. Thus, politics in its modern

sense becomes tied to a secularized theoretical–political notion of responsibility. Such binary concepts are implicated in those temporal and spatial metaphors that naturalize the spheres of family and civil society and distinguish them from the sphere of politics. However, the boundaries of the public and the private spheres, of the state and civil society, are frequently blurred in non-Western societies.³

Giddens provides us with a typology of the multidimensional characteristics of modernity (1985, 1990). He links modernity to the rise of commercial capitalism, industrialism and the development of the modern state. Giddens describes the modern world-system as consisting of four overlapping yet separate orders: heightened surveillance, capitalistic enterprise, industrial production and the consolidation of a centralized control of means of violence (1985: 5). He focuses on the unprecedented leap in authoritative and allocative resources of power unleashed from the transition to dynamic industrial capitalism and a system of nation-states. Authoritative power constitutes the extension of social control of time–space, while allocative power constitutes the capacity to control nature. He examines forms of social control that arise from the expansion of authoritative resources of power in the nation-state system. The authoritative power of the state enables the intensification of surveillance and territoriality in modern everyday life.

This gives modernity discernible characteristics in four main institutional dimensions: capitalism (system of production of commodities for the market), industrialism (application of inanimate sources of power through productive techniques as a prime medium for the transformation of nature), coordinated administrative power through surveillance (control of information and the monitoring of the activities of subject populations by states and other organizations), and military power (concentration of the means of violence in the hands of the state) (Giddens 1990: 55–63). These four institutional aspects of modernity are not reducible to one another, because the form and logic of each dimension is quite different from those of the others. According to Giddens, each of the four institutional dimensions constitutes a distinctive set of causal processes and structures. He argues that each institutional complex of modernity should be understood as an area of conflict. He explores connections among the four central dimensions of modernity and four social movements (labor movements, ecological movements, free speech/democratic movements and peace movements), which could provide alternative visions of the contemporary structure of modernity (Giddens 1990: 158–63).

Mann also attempts to relate capitalist development to the formation of the modern state, and puts forth a theory of state power: ‘institutional statism’. The theory holds that the modern state developed via the concentration of bureaucratic power. Mann (1993: 6–10) identifies four sources of power: political, military, economic and ideological. He categorizes configurations of power as authoritative versus diffuse, collective versus distributive, intensive versus extensive. Mann views societies not as social systems, but as composed of four interrelated power networks, the interrelationship of which can account for the structure and history of societies.⁴ That is to say, the diffused nature of power and the autonomous power of the state can be explained in terms of these multiple networks of power.

Mann's concept of power is more comprehensive than Giddens' in the sense that it allows one to link the material and organizational mechanisms of the modern state to cultural and historical traditions.

On the same issue, Rozman links the emergence of a distinctive form of state in Japan and China to an intermediate level of non-coercive 'guidance' to society (1990: 9, 172–87). Japan and China are viewed as directed societies, which envisioned a paternalistic state capable of leading a harmonious society by means of impressive symbols of legitimacy and outstanding professional service. Here, we can see the consequences of the dynamic interplay between the state and civil society and the multilayered relationship between cultural tradition and social structures. Networks of power cannot be adequately explained through either the general dynamics of state system (e.g. the armed forces and bureaucracy) or a simplified configuration of power (e.g. the monopolization of violence).

(3) 'Collective action' and state formation

Pierre Birnbaum (1988) attempts to explain patterns of collective action and contrasting ideologies pertaining to the formation of the modern state in Western Europe. He treats the state as an independent variable, and views its emergence as resulting from a differentiation of social structure that gives the modern state unique historical characteristics. Birnbaum shows how the state influences the formation of ideology, and especially the ideology and structure of the workers' movement, its organization and strategy. He employs a theory of knowledge, privileging socio-economic settings over socio-political settings, to clarify the relationship between ideologies and types of states.⁵

In the French case, for example, the state was highly institutionalized, centralized and autonomous from the ruling class. This is the main reason why anarchism or anarcho-syndicalism spread and why its influence over the workers' movement was so tremendous. The absolutist bureaucratized French state was too strong for the working class to fight as a target, so it was understandable why the working class accepted the strike and attempted to make a self-organization to correspond to the state.

In contrast to the French model, there was little differentiation between the state and the dominant class in England, where rapid industrialization and political centralization occurred, and the state was, as Birnbaum suggests, fused with the dominant class. Because of this, trade unionism was much stronger in England than in other European countries and 'voluntarism' spread until the 1960s. The intervention of the state was limited and hence the working class did not have to fight against the state but rather needed to negotiate with employers.

The German social structure was similar to that of France but the German state was fused with the dominant class. This fusion resulted in a Marxist social movement because the state was regarded as the instrument of a dominant capitalist class. As Birnbaum's insightful interpretation shows, countries with comparable economic structure and degree of development may have different forms of states and ideologies.

If Badie and Birnbaum are right when they argue that the state rises from the particular socio-historical context of Western Europe (1983: 135), where a division of labor combined with a strong resistance to social change on the part of certain elements of feudal society, then how was it transferred to the non-Western countries that had little in common with European social conditions? For Badie and Birnbaum, state formation in the Third World occurred through imitation, and a more or less compulsory importation of exogenous patterns (1983: 98–101). In their framework, the graft of the Western model of the state to the Third World has given rise to anomalies in its nature and functions. It has often resulted in the emergence of hybrid forms of government such as totalitarian, despotic and authoritarian models inimical to political development. According to them, exogenous patterns of state formation in the Third World cannot effectively resolve the problems that occur in these different contexts. Third World countries have evolved quite different forms of political organization. These forms reflect their own cultural traditions and social infrastructures in response to the economic and political legacies.

There is no doubt that states today, including relatively ‘underdeveloped’ states, are important actors on the global stage. Yet those states are more vulnerable to the international division of labor. It seems natural if they have ventured different state forms, different modes of development and different paths to modernity, which can be fostered in their culture and history.

2. State formation in early Korean history

An analysis of South Korean state formation must start with the historical and geographical aspects of the development of the Korean state that have left a significant impact on Korean modernity.⁶ There are a few turning points in the history of Korean state formation. First of all, under the influence of Chinese civilization, the Korean state took shape through the unification of a state system, or at least a constellation of several states with the introduction of civil-service examinations, top-down central tax reforms and the monopolization of violence. Korea and Japan both grew out of the shared insular/peninsular state system of the third to the seventh centuries. Unification of Korea, however, happened later than in Japan and China. Its state formation was accompanied by a retreat to a more limited territorial basis, with the establishment of more definitive boundaries. For instance, the seventh century unification by Silla was incomplete: the Korean state of Parhae, on the territory of today’s Manchuria, remained independent. The identification of Korean civilization with a peninsular state was the result of tenth-century developments: the rise of Koryo in Korea, the Song dynasty in China and the Khitan in Manchuria. However, this late unification also meant an early fixing of boundaries: these boundaries, in contrast to China and Japan, have remained constant ever since.

Second, the Mongol expansion in the thirteenth century affected the history of the whole of East Asia with different consequences. In the Korean case, the Mongols occupied the country but did not destroy the Korean state nor depose the

dynasty in power. The result was therefore twofold: the invasion did not disrupt the symbolic continuity of the Korean state that conveys a single historiography and national identity; yet it did deal a massive blow to the power structures in place, and helped pave the way for the Confucian project of rebuilding, which followed soon after the downfall of Mongol rule in China.

Third, Korea was on the receiving end of the only interstate conflict in the East Asian region in the early modern phase. From the early 1590s, Japan regularly informed the Choson government of its intentions to launch an attack on Ming China through Korea, in order to strengthen national unity and undermine the local governor's influence in Japan. The Japanese invasion of 1592 resulted in a great loss of lives, and the destruction of the land and census registers made it difficult for the Choson government to collect taxes, thus putting government affairs in disarray. This experience led not only to a strengthening of isolationism on the part of the Korean state but also to a weakening of Korean society.

Finally, Korea was at the crossroads of East–West political and military rivalry in the age of imperialism. The internal dynamic of the East Asian inter-state system was transformed when it was drawn into the Western-dominated global system. This affected Korea in a much more adverse way than China or Japan. The country that had been a cultural bridge between China and Japan now became an imperial target for them, and the geopolitically ‘disfavored’ Korean state was obstructed in all its attempts at autonomous development.

Significant in premodern Korean state formation was Korea's early closure of national territory, its cultural economic insularity, and the continuity of legal and political institutions that empowered the state against encroachments from above and below. The Korean monarch wielded great power, yet the bureaucratic aristocracy who held prominent positions in the bureaucratic state limited his power. The Korean patrimonial state tried to organize society in a hierarchical and harmonious public order through Confucian symbols of legitimacy.

Modern Korean state formation since the Second World War, however, saw some significantly different features. First, it arose after a colonial experience of a particular kind; the post-colonial state took over the economic infrastructure and some part of the apparatus of the colonial power. Second, from the outset the state-building process was disrupted by civil war. There was a clear-cut division of the country into two states, both with significant but politically opposing international backing. Third, the conflicts surrounding the state-building process exploded into an international war between two major powers – the USA and China. Fourth, Korea is the only case of post-colonial state formation where national political division has persisted, in contrast to the historical conditions characterized by a long tradition of civilizational and political unity. The division of the country renders the project of state formation somewhat incomplete, leaving both Korean states dependent on global power blocs and hegemonic allies for national security and economic opportunity. Finally, nationalism has played a key role in the whole process of state formation. It challenged colonialism and its legacies in many ways, while simultaneously adopting and imitating the practices and institutions of its former colonizer.

Importantly, none of the processes that paralleled the lengthy transition from feudalism to capitalism in Western Europe and its associated state centralization occurred in Korea. Rather, 'modernization' (in the sense commonly used as a Western phenomenon) occurred in a relatively compressed time period, on the foundations laid by the Japanese colonial administration. The Japanese occupation of Korea transformed Korean society and prepared for the economic transformation. Along with other aspects of social transformation, Western culture and political systems were transmitted through the Japanese colonial government. A more important long-term impact of Japanese colonialism, however, can be found in the relations between the state and civil society after liberation.

The Japanese colonial government modernized the structure of the Korean state for its own purposes, and caused social and cultural disruptions as the direct consequences of its colonial policies. As Hagen Koo notes, this brought about a greater separation of the state from society, and resulted in a deep-rooted animosity against the colonial state (1993: 236). The harsh colonial experience of the Korean people provided a common base for nation building for both North and South Korea after liberation, which in turn consolidated nationalism. Despite the repressive Japanese rule, traditional social and political continuities were preserved in this process more than is generally recognized.

Japanese imperialism and expansionism were the immediate cause of Korea being incorporated into an incipient Japan-centered regional system, and thus the transformation of the Korean social structure. To serve its own interests, Japan imposed a 'systematic colonization' on Korean society through land reforms and promotion of various industrial sectors. Rapid industrialization under Japanese colonial rule changed the class structure of Korean society. It created a broad range of new social relationships, and established the structural foundation for a future modern state. During this process, many Koreans lost ownership of their land to the colonial government and to a quasi-government organization – the Oriental Development Company with many Korean landowners becoming either tenants or wageworkers. The colonial state almost entirely prevented the traditional Korean ruling class from taking part in politics, but allowed the traditional landlords to hold a degree of economic power through collaboration with the colonial state. Finally, there were also large-scale emigrations to Japan, Manchuria, Siberia and China, for political and/or economic reasons, which changed the demographic make-up of the country.⁷

The colonial projects contributed to the absence of hegemonic class in the political system after liberation (Waldner 1999: 126; Eckert 1993).⁸ All classes were weak and internally divided. Consequently, indigenous nationalist leaders were not able to form a unified leadership for a new nation-state. Korean landlords who had been protected by the colonial government were suddenly deprived of their political backing, and their political and ethical legitimacy were undermined. In addition, land reforms in the South, launched by the US army in 1948 and completed by the South Korean government in 1950, further weakened the landed class. In post-colonial Korea, neither landlords, nor peasants, nor an indigenous bourgeoisie, were able to secure economic positions, which would have enabled

them to develop class alliances and the power resources necessary for modern state building. Hence, there was a political vacuum resulting from the end of the colonial state in the period 1945–8.

The uncertainty and fluidity of society in this period tempted the Korean leftists, who had grown during the colonial era through the independence struggle, to envisage a socialist revolution. However, the socialist revolutionary movement during this period ended in failure despite the high expectations and the mass base of supporters longing for a new nation. This was partly due to the United States' counter-revolutionary intervention based on an anti-Communist policy, and partly due to the antagonism between factions of political leadership who were all nationalists, but ideologically different otherwise.

Drastic institutional changes took place in modern Korea when Japan was defeated in the Second World War and Korea was liberated from Japanese colonialism but placed under the US and Soviet armies of occupation, and when the Cold War began to dominate international politics. A territorial division, supposed to be only temporary, was designed to eliminate the possibility of the Soviet Union's occupation of the entire peninsula as part of American policy to contain communism. This territorial division has become an enduring source of conflict in the Korean society. The destructive and non-congruent relations between the state and society brought about a civil war in the small peninsula, and finally consolidated two different regimes under the protection of two superpowers.

The effects of international factors on state formation in Korea can be seen in the United States' and the Soviet Union's heavy involvement in Korea's development during the Second World War and after decolonization.⁹ In the North, the Soviets made use of numerous communist and local nationalist committees that had been organized in pursuit of independence during the Japanese occupation. The Soviet army influenced the composition of its central government, the so-called Provisional People's Committee for North Korea, led by Kim Il Sung. However, as Henderson points out, the Soviet army exerted little direct influence on Korea's national affairs at the time, which was dominated by the purging of Korean collaborators with Japan, and the redistribution of property (1986: 98). Soon after the establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the Soviet Union withdrew its troops from North Korea.

In the South, on the other hand, the rule of US forces was more direct. In sharp contrast to the US occupation of Japan, where the US had well-planned policies in advance, the US army arriving in the South had no specific goals except a general policy of 'containment': to prevent the emergence of more states with a Communist government (Watanuki 1973). Instead of recognizing the local government that allegedly had a pro-Marxist propensity, the United States established a US military government. Various Korean groups fought against the US occupation authorities in the name of national sovereignty. The American military government put down social movements and political struggles that had revolutionary characteristics. The US authorities denied all demands for a representative national government run by the Koreans themselves. In this process, owing to their lack of administrative organization, US occupational forces depended upon

ex-colonial state organizations and personnel to suppress civil unrest, and strengthened the neocolonial elements in the new state.

The division of Korea and the resulting civil war further distorted the already skewed relationship between the state and civil society. The Korean War (1950–3), which began as a civil war but developed into an international one, ended in failure for both North and South Korea. It perpetuated the national division and caused irreversible animosity between the North and the South. The devastating experience of the Korean War produced a constant need to defend each from the hegemonic ambitions of the other. In the North, this was articulated through the ideology of *juche* (self-reliance); in the South, through that of anti-communism. The war destroyed the existing social structure and changed human relationships. It caused poverty, insecurity and distrust among Koreans, and made it possible for the state in both sides to reinforce repressive national security organizations. It also made it possible for the elites on both sides of the border to mobilize the masses for industrialization programs and to control civil society through authoritarian means. The latter resulted in the demise of public spheres in both Koreas.

In the North, the relation between the state and the civil society has been described by Bruce Cumings as ‘socialist corporatism’: a strong, highly organized party based on the principle of core leadership; centralized, bureaucratic, top-down administration; a centrally planned economy; and the nationalistic ideology of *juche* (1990: 54). An existing weak civil society was totally absorbed by the strong state. In the South, the state, faced with a militarily more powerful North Korean government, established anti-communism as the state ideology. This perpetuated a sense of danger and emergency in civil society.

Despite the urgent need for economic reforms in response to the painful predicament after the Korean War, the South Korean state was left floundering with no clear economic policy until Park came to power in 1961. In the process of economic development, the subsequent military governments played a dual, and in the end, contradictory role: mobilizing civil society for industrialization and economic growth on the one hand; suppressing political participation of the public on the other. Above all, the rise of the military marked a significant moment in the history of state formation as it led to the emergence of strong government. The military and the social concerns of the new regime, i.e. national security and developmental ambitions, led to the transformation of the social structure, political system and economic policy. The military elite in South Korea acquired an extraordinary power over national resources, and thus had the ability to take developmental initiatives.

South Korean industrialization was launched after the civil war, in conditions where traditional social structures had almost completely broken down, while colonial legacies remained relatively strong. The impact of the war has been crucial as a force propelling state formation (Tilly 1989). The Korean War, with the characteristic of both civil and interstate war, played an essential role in the constitution of a modern state in both Koreas. Hjalte Tin (1995) defines civil war as a destructive, non-congruent relation between state and civil society. On the face of it, the Korean War may be seen as an inter-state rather than a civil war, as

it was fought within a nation but by two states. This, however, is far too simplistic because the conflict between the two states originated from a common source: an elite struggle for power within one nation, which resulted in the separation of the state from the nation (civil society) and the creation of new states.¹⁰

In the aftermath of the war, South Korea, in the context of a tightly bipolarized international security system, was closely aligned with the US. Security arrangements in Northeast Asia after the Korean War were supplemented by economic cooperation between the US, Japan and South Korea. South Korea became one of the major markets for Japanese goods and capital, and it took advantage of economic, technological and military advances from Japan and the US. In addition, South Korean economic development proceeded with a constant 'threat' from North Korea, whose regime was supported by China and the USSR. All these factors influenced economic development strategies and policies, which in turn affected the pattern of state-civil society relations.

Nationalism played, and continues to play, a decisive role in the whole process of modern state formation in Korea. Korean nationalism initially developed in reaction to the increasing foreign influence on domestic politics and economy in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It was consolidated in a highly politicized form during the colonial period. Korean nationalism found a real and symbolic enemy in Japan. Anti-Japanese sentiment and the powerful attachment to Korean nationalism encompassed all social actions and transcended class interests. At the same time, nationalism contributed to the emergence of a national political identity.

However, the narrow framework of anti-colonial nationalism was not sufficient for a new modern nation-state of broader interests and purposes. The aspirations of anti-colonial nationalism could never be fulfilled because of an agricultural economy, which was incapable of eradicating poverty and restructuring society. Rapid industrialization has been pursued as an urgent task of South Korea's development. In pursuing this objective, the Japanese model of modernization has been adopted since 1961. This resulted in a different role for the state and a different mode of development: one where the state was not merely an upholder of order and an enforcer of property rights and contractual obligations, but the main instrument of economic growth and development. In practice, the essence of this novel form of Korean nationalism was a fusion of modern and traditional components.

It is useful here to examine the continuity of colonial and post-colonial phases in the process of South Korean state formation against Benedict Anderson's (1990) analysis of 'old state and new nation' in his interpretations of state formation in Indonesia.¹¹ Anderson analyzes the policy of the New Order under Suharto as a combination of the new nation and the old state. Indonesia is a case of a powerful state trying to create a nation from a society that is culturally and ethnically fragmented, whereas South Korea is a case of a powerful state being recreated, or reconstructed, out of an old nation of a homogeneous ethnicity and culture. In both cases, the military had an extensive participation in national life through its activities in the economy and politics, and thus became an instrument of economic

modernization and social change. Unlike the Indonesian state that acquired a ready-made military apparatus with nationalist origins and aspirations, the South Korean military was created in a process of state formation, and predominantly shaped by the US. The Indonesian state under President Sukarno was a populist authoritarian government. Its legitimacy was based on the nationalist movement and mass mobilizations during the Dutch colonial period. By contrast, Suharto's Indonesia was born out of a major conflict within coalitions of the left wing and nationalist groups, and out of the lasting economic crisis. Having eliminated the communists and silenced leftist nationalism, Suharto went on to push 'de-Sukarnonization.' At the same time, while the army's ascendancy over other organizations was strengthened, its leadership was purged and put under an increasingly tight control of Suharto's clique.

There are points of similarity between the Indonesian and South Korean cases. In particular, Suharto's *New Order* and Park's *Yushin Constitution* placed great stress on the army's role in terms of economic growth. It is not surprising therefore that they found it important to engage in ideological battles against populist anti-imperialism, communism and leftist nationalism. In both cases, the states are bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes characterized by rapid economic growth and patrimonialism, even if the causes of their emergence are not necessarily the same. While the degree of state control over the economy, society and the nation differs, the state structure of the two countries all came from their old state. Historical processes typical of the colonial era shaped the New Order in Indonesia. In other words, the historical origins and overall character of the New Order were found in the powerful institutional and social legacy of the Dutch colonial state (Berger 1997). As for South Korea, the character and form of the Yushin Constitution resembled that of the militarist Japanese state. At the same time, it should be noted that a highly centralized bureaucratic system was not only peculiar to the colonial state but also founded during the Choson Dynasty. As for the authoritarian political structure and patrimonial political culture, both states drew on the premodern and colonial historical process. What separates these two is that the South Korean developmentalist state has been far more successful than the Indonesian one in achieving political and economic development. This may have to do with the different capacity of cultural creativity as well as some critical institutional mechanisms in the two states.

State formation in Korea is a good example of state formation as an ongoing process, characterized, as Elias and Arnason point out, by both continuity and discontinuity of social structures, and by an uneven and complex development of human interdependencies. Changing patterns or levels of social differentiation and integration call for new functions and cause discontinuity in the development of the state. Increased functional differentiation of the state results from greater social differentiation and reciprocity between political elites and the masses. Korean state formation shows complicated patterns of interconnections between continuity and discontinuity in the interplay of internal dynamics and external containment.¹² The complete breakdown of the pre-existing social structure after Japanese colonization and the Korean War have provided ground for the growth

of neo-traditionalism in the emergent state. The reconstruction of tradition is an outcome of accumulated interactions between the state and civil society. What is unique in the South Korean case has been the (re)emergence and strengthening of neo-familism (filial piety), patrimonialism and regionalism in the process of state-led industrialization.

3. State formation in post-colonial Korea: a key modern project

(1) The rise of developmentalist state

As discussed earlier, state building in post-colonial South Korea is of primary importance for understanding Korea's modernity and modernization. The take-off of capitalist development in South Korea has been an essential part of the state-building process. To understand this process, it is necessary to focus on the Korean version of the developmentalist state, where a particular form of development and modernity has been realized. In this section, I will examine this process more closely, and elaborate on how the state became the main driving force in South Korea's modernization process.

Over the last few decades it has become commonplace to speak of the Korean state in terms of its economic role and its achievements. Whether or not this is ideologically appealing or empirically true, the dominant image of the Korean state is that of a strong and efficient institution which is largely responsible for the rapid economic development. As recent political-economic studies of the interaction between government and markets in East Asia show, mainstream neoclassical economic theory fails to explain rapid economic growth in the Asian context (see Wade 1996). It overlooks the 'pragmatic' fusion of politics and economics in the East Asian model of development and the close interaction between the state and civil society. Moreover, only recently have Western scholars become more aware of the significance of non-political and non-market factors: namely, social structures and cultural traditions and practices.

One of the major new perspectives among political scientists recognizes a political culture that is intricately intertwined with the political economy. In contrast to Western nation-states, where there is a formal institutional separation between the state and civil society, the East Asian nation-states represent different models with a considerable diversity among themselves. This diversity reflects each nation's different background in the socio-historical process, and shows different modes of social transformation. As such, development studies need to look at the diversity of different experiences of development.

In the process of modernization, most Asian countries gave priority to economic development as a means of survival in the international arena and catching up with more advanced Western countries. Economic growth is considered the top priority. Consequently, economic growth brought about a more intense division of labor, the differentiation of social structures and the diversification of social interests. Korea is an exemplary case of such development.

Compared to East Asia's economic achievements, its political and social development lacked sufficient scholarly attention. The impact of economic growth on political development has not been adequately explained. Rather, the role of the state in economic development has been routinely viewed as being limited to the fundamentals of economic rationality, in the sense of being either a guarantor of market rationality and contractual obligations (the neoclassical perspective), or an implementer of a rational industrial policy (statist perspective). By contrast, Arnason (1989b) argues that the combined dynamics of politics, economics and culture allow us to have a broader perspective to examine the multidimensional process of modernization. In this perspective, the question of whether or not economic growth is leading to democratization in Asia in general and in Korea in particular cannot be answered in uniform terms. More specifically, general cultural factors must be incorporated if the internal relations between political economy and political culture are to be identified and understood (see Morley 1993).

There is no doubt that the role of the state has been decisive in South Korea's economic development. The developmental role of the state is in accordance with Alexander Gerschenkron's thesis, whereby the more economically backward a country is, the greater the motivational role played by the government in its modernization (Gerschenkron 1966: 1621). This role becomes embodied in the government's and military's explicit interventions in economic policy formation and implementation; in the mobilization of personnel and material resources; and in organization and coordination of nation-wide economic activity. Relatively speaking, this can be called the 'top-down' model of modernization, featuring maximization of the state's economic capabilities.

In addition, cultural traditions, considered by some to be obstructions to economic growth, have been given a new recognition in assisting the rise of industrial capitalism. First and foremost, the emphasis on collectivism and hierarchy and the Confucian model of social organization become conducive to effective coordination and economic growth. It allows a late-developing society to more effectively mobilize its population and more efficiently organize its economic activity. Both of these factors call for and depend on efficient political control. All of these form a plausible explanation of why the authoritarian-bureaucratic Korean state has been able to exercise an effective control over society.

The idea that an authoritarian government, even unwittingly, could pave the way to prosperity and democracy implies that there may be many different paths to and through modernity. Each state must work with the specific legacies of its history, and the particular conditions of its political economy, class formation and cultural specificity. Whatever the path to modernization, each society goes through various stages of transformation. Yet it would be naive to view an era of authoritarian government as an intermediary stage in a predetermined transition from authoritarian to democratic rule, where the former is necessary for the promotion of economic development and the establishment of a democracy 'in the long run.' Even in an economically relatively successful state like South Korea, bureaucratic authoritarian rule has been the greatest obstacle to democracy. The government and, more broadly speaking, the state closely collaborated with

dominant sectors of society but excluded and marginalized others, forcing them to take the burdens of rapid industrialization and economic development.

However, exclusion and marginalization had their ultimate price, for even the strongest and most authoritarian states. The year 1987 was a turning point of epochal significance for the South Korean polity where a 'regime change' and an expansion of the political arena finally took place. However, we should not be misled into assuming that these changes, and other such transformations, arose as a necessary consequence of a strong state and/or economic growth. There is no golden rule that posits a necessary connection between economic development and democratization. Economic growth alone is not sufficient for democratization. On the contrary, it is reasonable to think that the partial democratization of South Korea is not because of an extended period of authoritarian rule, but in spite of it.¹³

This view is supported when we see that the authoritarian state's success in Korea seems to be an exceptional case, rather than an instance of a general rule. To understand why a partial democratization has occurred in South Korea, one must look into the endogenous socio-historical conditions prevalent in South Korea, the peculiar conjuncture of international conditions in the decades after the Second World War, and South Korea's unique place in relation to these conditions. These events produced unintended consequences, which are particularly significant for an understanding of South Korean political and economic development. The postwar economic development and subsequent partial democratization process was a consequence of the internal dynamics of state formation as a source of continuity and discontinuity between tradition and modernity.

Now what are the political and economic characteristics of South Korean state formation? First, the post-colonial South Korean state was an authoritarian one. While the Korean state institutionalized some aspects of economic liberalization, it was much more restrictive when it came to political liberalization. Governments justified authoritarianism by the alleged threat from the North and in the name of national development. Once a level of development was reached, the growing pressures on political legitimization compelled the movement toward political liberalization.

Second, the South Korean state has played a key role in directing the courses of economic development and political change in the process of rapid industrialization. The state induced the pattern of Korean economic growth to one of dependent development, that is, one that was heavily dependent upon the world market and foreign capital. The state has also defined the context for economic development and political authoritarianism during the past few decades.

Third, state policies contributed to class formation by creating a large scale of working class of a particular character and by enhancing the economic position of the middle class. Although the state was neither a tool of a capitalist class nor a committee for the bourgeoisie, it increasingly articulated the interests of the capitalist class in a way that made such interests appear consistent with the interests of the nation as a whole. Nevertheless, the state's economic policy, as Amsden (1989) argues, was based primarily on institutional efficiency rather than

political ideology. The state tried to avoid becoming a *comprador* vassal in the transnational system, despite its dependence on transnational business.

Fourth, nationalism has been employed by the political elite to mobilize popular support and thereby to legitimate its own interests as the 'national interest.' In the 1960s and 1970s, the Korean state adopted the slogan of 'modernization of the motherland' and developed a moral justification for its activity. This particular version of nationalism can be defined as *conservative statism*, an ideology and practice that focus on total mobilization of the population for the economic developmental strategy envisioned by the state bureaucrats.

South Korea's state formation is also a dialectical process, where multi-directional social forces both compete and converge. The central administrative structure under the Rhee regime (1948–60) was completely dependent upon the top political leader. The top political leader had the key decision-making control of the distribution of properties left behind by the Japanese and of US foreign aid. Moreover, the import-substitution economic policy called for a high level of state protection for local enterprises. These enterprises had to compete for limited access to licenses from the government. Under these circumstances, corruption became rampant among politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen. Political favors and personal relations were critical in capital allocation and acquisition of state properties. Although the state has been modernized, the 'form' of the administrative structure and the actual mode of administrative operation were still dominated by a form of patrimonial bureaucracy and nepotism. The historic 4.19 Uprising and the fall of Syngman Rhee's regime in South Korea in 1960 were the result of economic deprivation and the withdrawal of US support. The authorities' violent response to the protest led to public opinion against the state's violence which in turn led to further protests. It eventually developed into a major political upheaval that overthrew the regime.

When Park Chung Hee took control of the machinery of the state after the military *coup d'état* in 1961, he was able to implement the harsh and aggressive measures to change the Korean economy (1961–79). Despite the lack of natural resources, capital and technology, the state controlled the flow and actual disposition of substantial amounts of capital, launched a series of five-year economic development plans, established a favorable investment climate for domestic and foreign capital, and guided Korea's integration into the world capitalist system.

Park changed the Rhee regime's vague political and ideological goals of anti-Japanism and the Chang regime's liberal democracy to the more immediately obtainable goals of anti-communism and economic development.¹⁴ Under Park's rule, the nature of the South Korean state moved toward a more authoritarian-bureaucratic model. In order to carry out the urgent tasks of economic development, Park relied on an ostensible meritocracy established via a highly competitive examination. At the same time, people from Park's own region were heavily favored. The occupants of the 'core positions' directly related to economic policy planning and implementation, were predominantly filled by people from the same region – the Kyongbuk province. Privileges were given to certain regions during the industrialization process.

Moreover, Park expanded his political power by changing the economic strategy from import-substitution to an export-oriented industrialization policy that fostered capital concentration and repressed labor demands. The administration was reorganized to take a more active role in capital accumulation, with the expansion of the state's power and control over economic activities in the intensive industrialization process. The state owned a significant amount of means of production and used the bureaucracy to implement a statist model of development. In so doing, it emphasized the development of heavy industry and the use of the most advanced technology to promote this kind of development.

Export-promotion policies generated interests on the part of key domestic business groups. Under dependent structural constraints, private enterprises had to demonstrate their success by keeping up with export targets. To avoid failure, Korean enterprises tried to keep all the channels open to cope with the politicians and bureaucrats. Informal channels become more important when bureaucrats hold so much discretionary power. The state's political power overshadowed the economic freedom of private enterprise. Furthermore, the shift from light to heavy industrialization since the mid-1970s reinforced not only Park's 'development dictatorship,' but also 'crony capitalism.'

Above all, the state-business alliance in South Korea contributed to the rapid growth of the large business conglomerates (chaebol), enabling them to compete with the world's leading industrialists. However, with increasingly economic concentration and wage increases, the chaebols as well as the labor movement pushed for a change of direction in the 1980s. The shift from the classic developmentalist state paradigm to economic liberalization changed the role of the state from being developmental to regulatory, and placed limits on the scope of state intervention (Moon 1988).

Several domestic and international conditions compelled the state to stabilize the economy and adjust the economic structure to fit into a more liberal market system. When Chun Doo Hwan came to power through military intervention in 1979–80, he tried to compensate for his lack of legitimacy by solving the economic crisis in the style of the former President Park. Yet there was a difference. Chun adopted neoconservative reforms that were distinct from the growth-oriented strategies of the past. The reforms entailed short-term adjustment through macro-economic stabilization, a radical transformation of the economy through the restructuring of industry, liberalization of the financial sector, opening up of the economy to free trade, and redefining relations between the state and markets. However, it was not through the invisible hand of the market, but through repressive, yet effective, authoritarian rule. The neoconservative reforms appeared to have succeeded, especially in terms of short-term stabilization. All of this was achieved at the expense of civil society. The society was as suppressed and tightly controlled as under the Chun regime.

Despite the successful management of the economic crisis in the early 1980s, Chun had to face new challenges from a growing number of social and political groups. Moon and Kim attribute the transition from authoritarianism to democratization to three factors: structure, culture and leadership choice (Moon and

Kim 1996: 139–67). According to them, the processes of development and modernization have changed the social structure with a set of new state–civil society relations. These processes also shifted the conservative authoritarian political culture to one more responsive to democratic value. Leadership choice became a crucial variable in the political and economic transition, as we can see in the successive stages of the developmentalist state: Park’s export-led industrialization and Chun’s neoconservative reforms.

Park crafted a subtle ‘developmentalist’ coalition with big business and mobilized the rural sector through his ‘New Village Movement.’ This enabled him to maintain a political alliance with the large conglomerates and farmers in the rural areas, in spite of the systematic repression of the public sector using institutional and legal instruments. Chun, however, undermined the coalition with big business and farmers, as his reforms of industrial rationalization, monopoly regulation law, subsidy cuts and import liberalization have affected the interests of these groups. This consequently changed the underlining political relationships between the state and social forces. Furthermore, the economic growth achieved since the 1960s strengthened both the large conglomerates and labor, which in turn became social and political forces for economic liberalization and democratization.

As in other East Asian countries, the South Korean state has made effective use of the bureaucratic system. The South Korean military regime has acquired a considerable concentration of power. This empowered the state and depoliticized civil society. We cannot emphasize enough the significance of military intervention in this context. The South Korean military, as mentioned before, has played a series of important roles both in politics and in the economy. As Graham points out, the Korean military has played multiple roles at the same time: as the holder of a political veto power, as a guardian against internal and external threats, as a promoter of social mobility and economic development, and as a political institution builder (Graham 1991). This kind of power imbalance in the political system, associated with the military’s position, contributed to the economic development at the beginning of the modernization process. It neutralized internal pressures, and enabled the state to deal with external pressures. But in more recent years, the military has faced new challenges arising from new domestic and international circumstances. The military institutions are no longer as useful for state formation, and their roles in economic development are not as effective as they once were. As the state creates new development strategies that place greater emphasis on technological sophistication and advanced management, the military organizations have had to undergo structural change.

As mentioned above, the authoritarian state under Park Chung Hee and Chun Doo Hwan managed to have economic growth and political repression coexist. South Korea’s pattern of dependent development and semi-peripheral position inclined the state toward intervention in the economy, control and repression of labor, and political demobilization and exclusion. Industrialization created a social basis for political opposition against authoritarianism. The hypertrophied repressive state institutions increased political instability and gave rise to the entrenched and diversified opposition movements. In the early period of development,

authoritarian politics, developmental strategies, and incentive and control systems prevailed. After sustained high economic growth, however, state domination became less effective; an increasingly rebellious society replaced the authoritarian regime with a more democratic one. The strategy of exclusionary politics for economic growth in South Korea was undermined by its very success.

How strong, then, has the authoritarian power remained following the democratic opening since 1987? Has the authoritarian government been losing its control over civil society? Did the government overcome the crisis of authority when it conducted a wide-ranging program of reforms from 1993 onward? Some scholars define the political transition under the Roh government as a shift from rigid authoritarianism to 'soft authoritarianism' (Bedeski 1994; see also Roy 1994). They consider this shift as an improvement that continued into the Kim Young Sam government. This democratic transition was accompanied by an elite settlement involving a fundamental transformation of elite relations from discontinuity to consensual unity. Political discourse during the Kim Young Sam administration has been characterized by neoconservative principles and a political project of socio-economic structural adjustment through populist mobilization (Yoon 1996). Despite the rhetoric of reform, the institutional foundations of corruption, i.e. relationships in which big business donations are exchanged for favorable official/government consideration, remained (Moran 1999). The absence of power of check and balance against the government-business nexus and the conservative political agenda enabled the persistence of corruption.

What then has changed since the democratic transformation? Given the overall social ethos, we need, first of all, to take into account the extent and complexity of the interconnections between the traditional legacy and contemporary policy in South Korea. There has been a political tradition that can accurately be described as highly centralized and elitist. What is lacking in this system is a party system arranged on principled ideological differences, and expressed through an open democratic system. South Korean politics is often characterized as personality-based, where the formation of a party takes place around a strong personality who has a solid regional power base. This results in constant power struggles between factions that produce a climate of instability in government. Kang sees regionalism as a function of a weakly institutionalized party system in which the personalized political party system leads to elections inclined in favor of political leaders from a particular region (Kang, D. 2001: 95). A Korean political scientist, Jang-Jip Choi, sees South Korea's democratization as incomplete in its substance, and believes that real popular democracy demands more than formal democracy or electoralism (Choi 1993b: 43–7). He finds that democracy in South Korea has taken a retrograde step since democratization as it fails to respond to divergent social demands and structural changes (Choi 2005). Choi attributes this to the Korean government's limited conception of democracy that shares much in common with neo-liberalism and to a weak party system.

The state's remaining coercive powers have been sharpened with regard to unification discourse in Kim Young Sam's government, although the intimidating effect has waned in the face of an increasingly confident citizenry. The government,

by virtue of the National Security Law, has monopolized the channels of unification discourse to maintain its ideological hegemony. This means that nationalism is likely to take precedence over democratic idealism as a principle on which governance is based. However, given a new flexibility of the state that has been apparent since the 1987 election, it remains open for the South Korean state to redefine its role in the long-term development process. The form and function of the state are not only simply determined by the economic base of society as the more simplistic forms of Marxist theory have suggested, but also depend upon the use of force (coercive capacity) and the exercise of cultural 'hegemony' (incorporative capacity). This may help us to explain why the Korean state has played such a central role in the overall development of South Korea, mobilizing the resources of cultural tradition (primarily Confucianism) and political culture (mainly factionalism/regionalism) to fulfill its aims and maintain its position of centrality within South Korean society.

The state, as a strategic decision-maker, developed its policy in accordance with its perception of the historically institutionalized infrastructural power where the state controls key resources in each policy domain. The resurgence of authoritarianism under Kim Young Sam's government is related to the weakness of the new democratic political forces, exacerbated by the subordination of economic policies to the state and political elites, and the political culture of charismatic leadership and clientelism. The extension of state power from an exclusively political apparatus to an economic interventionist or developmental guardian endangered its legitimacy in the face of incompatible demands made by internal social forces and external forces from global markets. The state has often been under siege by social forces and by incessant competition with other states. These conditions placed strict constraints on the state's capacities for realizing its aims and objectives.

(2) The formation of the middle class

Another important factor to consider in the processes of industrialization and democratization is the emergence of a large middle class. The 1987 political liberalization of South Korea resulted from popular resistance to the authoritarian regime. The phenomenon of popular movement of resistance and rebellion is one of mass populism rather than class struggle. The growing middle class and their active participation in nonviolent struggle changed the dynamics of state-society relations.

Koo (1994) explores how class politics in South Korea have been shaped by a strong interventionist state and by the intimate relationships created between the state and large capital, at the expense of organized labor. The middle classes developed in the environment of export-oriented industrialization, extensive state economic intervention, labor repression and the unique geopolitical situation in Northeast Asia. While South Korea's export-oriented industrialization in the 1960s resulted in a rapid growth in employment, the structural change to heavy and chemical industries in the 1970s brought about an expansion in the number

of white-collar workers. Also, small groups of independent businessmen driven by the desire for social mobility accelerated the growth of a new middle class. Korean middle classes are congregated in large urban areas, shape the predominant pattern of consumption, and help generate new political debates and economic policies. The middle class intelligentsia, a major critic of Korean development and the authoritarian state, has enhanced the process of political democratization.

Middle class politics in Korea have been instrumental in creating political openings for democratization. Koo (1991) analyzes the role of the middle class in two main political processes: working class formation and democratization struggles. Koo identifies two main ways of viewing the role of this new middle class in political transition. One view is that the South Korean middle class is a pro-democratic and pro-*minjung* (people) force, and plays a significant role in the democratization process. A second view is that it is a conservative force, opportunistic and contributing to the status quo. In contrast to this dualism, Koo develops a contextual analysis of South Korean middle-class politics around the democratic transition in 1987.¹⁵ As he points out insightfully, there was no significant difference between the aspirations of the middle class and the working class, and among different segments of the middle class, until after political liberalization. The role of the middle class in democratization is fluid and variegated, because the democratization process is complex and protracted. Thus, different segments of the middle class respond differently to political change.

South Korean labor organizations, along with the government and business enterprises, have grown swiftly in size during the period of rapid expansion of the economy.¹⁶ Prior to the 1980s, however, labor unions were controlled by and loyal to dictatorial governments. Workers were barred from belonging to independent labor unions and the bourgeoisie was yet to learn how to wrest with the powerful state. In the absence of a hegemonic bourgeoisie and a highly organized working class, a segment of intellectuals and students acting as an 'intervention' group played an important role in the rise of the labor movement. Under the severe repression of the state they contributed to the empowerment and critical consciousness of the working class and facilitated its transition toward more democratic forms of political and economic organization. Koo (1993) links the emergence of a working class to a socio-political movement known as the *minjung* movement. As he points out, the *minjung* movement helped politicize the working class by providing an oppositional ideology and organizational leadership through 'labor-student solidarity.'

The new political environment after political liberalization allowed the political activism of labor to emerge as a strong social force. Union actors dramatically increased massive labor membership and participation in the late 1980s with large number of strikes and union membership. This resulted in the improvement of working conditions as well as a constant political challenge to the authoritarian government. However, there was an increasing gap between the union leadership and the rank and file workers in the large-scale workers' struggles in 1987, as well as an increasing gap between the middle class and the working class, and between the different segments of the middle class. Although the radical leadership

succeeded in mobilizing labor, it was also split over its political vision and ideology. This split increased factionalism and finally led to the physical and psychological separation of the working class and the rest of the population.

In addition, the South Korean economy began to show a downturn in economic growth, caused by increasing protectionism in advanced industrialized countries, competition from other newly industrialized countries (NICs), limited technological innovations and over-production. These conditions split the middle strata's attitude and orientation to the labor movement. Economic growth and political democratization in the 1980s enhanced workers' power and the prospect of economic democracy. However, the entrenched economic authoritarianism of the state and powerful private capital were reluctant for further reform. Between them, the middle class tended to act as a relatively conservative and moderating force, revealing its distinctive class interest. The state took advantage of the new divisions to further isolate the labor movement, thus gained control over labor unrest with relative ease. Nevertheless, the Korean labor unions are still militant and, more recently, the working class managed to consolidate its power as a political organization (i.e. Democratic Labor Party) and have involved mainstream institutional politics.

The state's response to the emergence of a relatively affluent social strata is twofold: the state sought to enhance the appeal of the ruling party to affluent individuals, but constrain their affluent lifestyle by promoting a Confucian, moralistic idea of governance, especially in civil government (Kim, H. A. 1996: 185–203). It shows that Korea is still emerging from its authoritarian and Confucian inheritance in politics and culture. Like the state, the middle classes have struggled to retain elements of the old Confucian ways and simultaneously embrace a consumerist lifestyle (Lett 1998).

In sum, the extractive, coercive and incorporative capacities of the state have been enormously expanded in post-colonial Korea. However, as South Korean society has developed and differentiated, certain political reforms were unavoidable. Through economic modernization, the political conditions for economic and social growth have changed, and class consciousness has developed. The state has had to cope with various kinds of societal and environmental changes, arising from industrial development and increasing structural complexity, and a reinvigorated civil society. The old levers of control were weakened, and the room for maneuver by the military was increasingly constricted since the political transition. It is axiomatic that rapid economic development creates social tensions and political pressures for change of authoritarian systems. The strong South Korean developmentalist state had to cope with new social and political phenomena: the rise of the middle class, the growth of civil society and demands by the citizenry for more meaningful, institutionalized democratic forms of political participation. The state is now in a transitional period with an emerging relationship between the state and civil society.

In this chapter, I have endeavored to show South Korea's post-colonial state formation during the modernization process. The rapid modernizing process has been driven by a newly invented Korean version of the developmentalist state.

The problematic of state formation can be more adequately understood in the historical and civilizational contexts, where the political structure and culture allow an unusual level of social control and integration in the modernization process. My analysis though points to a need to look into a hidden dynamic in the state and civil society framework to understand how the state was able to do what it did. The effective operation of the type of developmentalist state required the support of the cultural tradition, social structure and social action. This is where I turn to now.

4 Civil society, reflexive subject and transformative culture

1. Beyond action and system theory

Having examined the institutional dynamics of the state itself, I will further explore in this chapter the dynamics of state formation in modern Korea in terms of culture, social structure and social action. I will discuss the concept of civil society and the public sphere using Habermas' framework, and then briefly examine Cohen and Arato's analysis of the Habermasian reconstruction of the concept of civil society, before moving to an analysis of civil society in Korea and its role in modern state formation. What I want to demonstrate here is that the state-civil society relationship can be understood more clearly in the context of cultural tradition than through the abstract dichotomy of state and civil society.¹ Often the concept of culture is used in a limited sense and the role of cultural interpretation in social theory has been underappreciated. In the following discussion of the South Korean case, I argue for the importance of the cultural dimension and an adequate appreciation of the concept of culture.

The focus in this chapter is the complex relationships between the South Korean state, civil society and the public sphere at the levels of social structures, culture and human agency. In particular, my aim is to open up discussion to include the cultural dimension without reducing it to either action or system theory. The importance of culture here lies in the reflexive modern project that grows through interpretations and reinterpretations of competing traditions and dynamic social forces. To establish a link between the system and an actor, the actor must be defined by the construction of one's own liberty, rather than the playing of social roles, and the system defined as a civil society in which collective conditioning of individual freedom is created (Touraine 1998). Challenging the logic of systemic reductionism (both economy- and state-centered perspectives), the idea of human agency must be related to a broader interpretive framework and to the dynamic relationships between historical contingency, structural constraints and cultural autonomy. In so doing, I place the discussion of the state and civil society relations back into its social and historical contexts.

(1) A critique of Habermas' theory of public sphere and civil society

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), Habermas offers an extended reflection on the nature of public life and how it has changed with the

historical development of the West. He traces the public-private dichotomy back to ancient Greece, and shows how the development of mercantile capitalism in the sixteenth century created the conditions for the emergence of a new kind of public sphere in early modern Europe. For Habermas, the concept of the public sphere refers to a space between civil society and the public authority of state and court. He considers a public forum in which the structure of civil society is combined with the authority of the state to be the quintessence of democracy. Believing that this public forum has become infused with strategic action and deformed and impoverished by a propagandistic and commercialized press, Habermas proposes a pessimistic view of the public sphere in late modern society. Decline of the public sphere, he argues, reflects the ascendancy of privatism as a cultural process, which, in turn, affects the socially constructed public sphere. Privatism is a feature of civil society in a state of modern capitalism, where voluntarism and solidarity discourses increasingly structure the association of social relations.

In his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984), Habermas developed the concept of communicative action and differentiated the logics of system and life-world, which substantially altered the theoretical status of the public sphere. Here, civil society is envisioned as being able to modernize independently from economy and state. Habermas stressed the rising space of civil society and the possibility of it being absorbed by market and state growth. The public sphere, he argued, has been transformed and distorted by the structural forces of capitalism. On the other hand, Habermas tried to develop a normative democratic theory based on the model of rational consensus. He elaborated radical democratic principles in his complex account of the modern political and legal institutions of constitutional democracies. The radical democratic public sphere is a form of political participation and public life that articulates through public discourse the needs and interests of multiple social agents.

In this context, it is useful to examine Habermas' *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (1990), focusing mainly on legal democratic theory. Habermas is more receptive to the American legal proceduralism that he had once rejected in *Legitimation Crisis* (1975) and suggests that the universalist radical democratic project has turned more liberal than ever before. One of the main questions for Habermas is the conditions that would make possible discussion of public affairs and democratic decision-making. Identifying the circumstances where a prevailing discourse becomes more a causal force than either an effect of physical coercion or economic constraint is one of the main issues in sociology. Discourse ethics, the theory of moral and political dialog, is a form of democratic theory. It endeavors to overcome the limitations of liberalism and communitarianism. With discourse ethics, Habermas explores dialog and its role in politics. For him, the goal of modern political theory is to develop a framework that can deal with the opposition between individual and society, equal rights and mutual solidarity, autonomy and the communal good.

Based on discourse ethics, Habermas offers a theory of a relationship between law, morality and politics and hopes it will bring them together while retaining their different principles and modes of operation. A key element of the theory is that norms of action are valid if all those possibly affected could accept each other

as participants in rational discourses. This relates to the principle of universalization: 'for a norm to be valid, the consequences and side effects of its general observance for the satisfaction of each person's particular interest must be acceptable for all' (Habermas 1990: 138). Habermas favors an unstructured process of opinion formation and discussion in interrelated public and private spheres as well as in formal political institutions. Democratic participation is the only possible basis, he argues, for legitimate legal authority in a modern world, and it is also the place where we can regenerate social solidarity. For Habermas, the emancipation of individuals and the creation of competent communities of self-determining citizens are both possible and justifiable by democratic discourse.

In this process, law is a method or means of mediation. Law embodies some of the tensions between facts and norms, between the empirical reality of capitalism and the normative demands of reason for democracy. Habermas (1996b) argues for an expanded role of law, legal liberalism and the structured processes of compromise, and substitutes for active popular sovereignty with a somewhat republican vision of consensus-building public reason (will). This is, I consider, a reasonable rendering of the liberal-Enlightenment position, perhaps a radical democratic version of it. It seeks to extend the human community with discursive agreement holding the promise of unforced consensus. By virtue of this perspective, democratic process and political responsibility through law are integrated with the conception of general will or popular sovereignty toward a communicative action. It is at this point that Habermas gives substantial content to democracy: a vibrant and just civil society connected to competent and engaged citizens who can speak fairly and truthfully with each other about themselves and the commonwealth.

By restructuring the public sphere as a discursively mediated arena of political participation, Habermas seeks to promote democratic consolidation. However, Habermas' description of the public sphere reflects a Eurocentric scenario that has its roots in the rise of bourgeois culture, directed by state bureaucrats or administrators. It is defined in ideological, universalistic and ahistorical terms. But civil society can hardly be understood as a natural outcome of evolutionary democratic forces. Rather it seems more appropriate to discuss its development within the socio-cultural and historical context. Habermas' emphasis on the bourgeois public sphere ignores other forms of public discourse that existed in Western societies,² let alone those of the non-West, and fails to provide an adequate analysis of state-civil society relations. Perhaps Habermas' 'public sphere' is best seen as an ideal type (Wakeman 1993; Huang 1993), for his assumptions and preconditions of the development of Western-style civil society are not always applicable to non-Western countries.

Civil society consists of a network of overlapping public spheres oriented toward the construction and contestation of public narratives about identity, influence and commitment. If the public sphere has the capacity to alter civil society and to shape the state, as Habermas presumes, then its own democratic practice must confront the questions of membership and the identity of the political community it represents (Calhoun 1992). Habermas' conceptualization of the Western bourgeois public sphere has led to the marginalization of working class

concerns, gender issues and ethnic conflicts. The lack of attention to the differences within the public sphere arguably produces middle-class oriented (and male-dominant) discourses. In this regard, Habermas fails to fully clarify an essential tension in the concept of the public sphere between an aspect of entrenched social practices, the institutional, and a normative ideal-type, the symbolic.

The interplay between politics, culture and discursive form in the public sphere requires further analysis. At the core of the public sphere is a cultural force of the symbolic 'public' that both shapes and is shaped through political practices. As a political category, the public is a claim about a community of citizens; as a cultural concept, it underlines a realm of symbolic reference about the community's lived experiences and imaginations embedded in specific narratives. In this sense, the public sphere is conceived as a field of contestations through competing narrative constructions about the community of citizens (Calhoun 1995: 248). Driven by the symbolic sense of public, a process takes place that imbues social relationships with moral and narrative meanings in the public sphere. In this sense, the concept of a public sphere – a space of discourse but also a space within which juridical entitlement can be enforced – is central for democracy. However, Habermas does not give a full explanation of the different levels of communication in the public sphere, where both webs of interpersonal relationships and large-scale categories of collective identity are intertwined. In this regard, Emirbayer and Sheller (1998) give a new nuance to the concept of public as 'open-ended flows of communication' which can emerge within the interstices of state, economy and civil society, as well as the different modalities of human agency. Their approach allows multiple images of the public and various spheres of collectivity and decision-making.

(2) Towards a normative concept of civil society?

Cohen and Arato develop and reconstruct the concept of civil society using Habermas' discourse ethics, and build a normative foundation for a theory of modern civil society (1988; 1992a,b). Cohen and Arato critically examine the history of the concept of civil society and reject the liberal dichotomy that juxtaposes state and society, the public and the private. For them, the concept of civil society designates a societal realm different from the state and the economy. They define civil society as having the following distinctive components: plurality, publicity, privacy and legality. This conceptualization of civil society reflects their adoption of Habermas' dualistic social theory that distinguishes between the political and economic subsystems and the life-world. Whereas the subsystems are steered by the media of power and money respectively and social interaction is based on strategic-instrumental rationality, the life-world is coordinated through action oriented towards reaching understanding and mutual agreement or consensus. A new type of civil society, they argue, has communication rather than property as the core of rights, and is distinct from economy and state.

The principle of discourse can be seen as a basis of a theory of political legitimacy. Practical discourse presumes autonomous and rational subjects who can participate to produce a rational consensus on the validity of a norm and

its institutionalization. The formation and expression of an autonomous individual moral conscience is possible only in a post-traditional and post-conventional socio-cultural life-world. Only such a life-world allows a critical reflexivity that can turn on its own norms. Cohen and Arato conceptualize civil society as the institutional framework of a modern life-world. They emphasize the close interconnection between an autonomous, active civil society and an intact, protected private sphere. In this context, actors in civil society aim to influence the political and economic subsystems to prevent colonization of the life-world/civil society by political and economic subsystems and its subsequent subordination to the fundamental logic of the media of power and money.

Cohen and Arato try to explain the complex interdependencies of life-world, civil society and political society from the perspective of Habermas' discourse ethics. Political society as an intermediary realm between civil society and the state is not only receptive to messages from civil society but also open to the functional logic of power. For them, the process of democratization can have its greatest impact within the institutions of civil society because this is where communicative action has the priority.

Cohen and Arato also use the idea of the self-limiting revolution to develop a program of 'bottom-up', self-limiting democratization. The paradigmatic carriers of such a self-limiting democracy are new social movements. Social movements are considered to be communicative institutions that play a fundamentally symbolic role in the definition and reconstitution of the social solidarity and collectivity. Social movements can contribute to the expansion of the civil sphere and develop new mechanisms by which such movements can reshape civil society.

Cohen and Arato have themselves fallen into certain Habermasian rhetoric, for they uncritically adopt his idealized theory of communication, without due consideration of the mundane institutions and processes organizing discourses and solidarities. They emphasize the principle of solidarity in the late capitalist society where separations are widening between political systems and the life-world and between the state and the market. They neglect the importance of the cultural sphere for solidarity. In agreement with Habermas, they think that the primary coordinating mechanism in democratic civil society is communicative interaction. Their account of discourse ethics, democratic legitimacy and basic civil rights cannot fully explain the institutions of domination, systematic inequality and identity politics. Identity politics are often oriented towards redefining cultural norms, individual and collective identities, appropriate social roles and modes of interpretation.³ These processes may well rule out discourse ethics. As Calhoun points out, culture is often defined as nationality (Calhoun 1993: 265–80; see also Moon, D. G. 1996: 70–84). Consequently, diverse interest groups in society tend to be treated as homogeneous, and may thereby be marginalized by privileged members of that society. People are subjects and become embodied, contextualized and historicized, rather than being static, fixed and unitary, and thus indifferent to cultural context and history. Culture signifies the intersection of various subject positions within a society where people can find common interest. Rather than as a rational-critical democratic discourse, social struggle by

individuals and groups can be seen as a struggle for recognition in this discourse framework that provides the symbolic resources for exclusion and inclusion.

(3) The public sphere and civil society in South Korea

As mentioned above, the Habermasian notion of civil society and public sphere is insufficient for explaining the dynamic relations between the state, civil society and economy in South Korea as it overlooks the different effects of political culture and the role of human agency. A civil society does not always emerge in response to the development of market structures. In the Korean case, civil society existed prior to the development of market structures.⁴ Civil society can and does exist in a variety of forms in different historical and cultural conditions (Hann and Dunn 1996). By problematizing Habermas' accounts of the development of democratic social institutions and 'universalistic' cultural practices, we can move toward explaining the relative structural autonomy of culture and its root in the semiology of the symbolic codes in the discourse of Korean civil society.⁵

First of all, the oppositional framework of state–civil society has led to a one-sided narrative. While the traditional definition of civil society is based on a strict division between the state and society, non-traditional forms of civil society are found in different civilizational contexts. The history of South Korea as an authoritarian client state sees a different type of state–civil society relationship. Korean cultural features challenge the separation of the state from society as in a zero-sum relation. In the Confucian tradition, state and society are not entirely distinct entities. Their relationship is often characterized by overlap and intermingling. The expected role of the state is to cultivate the moral values of men through its rites. Most people view the state as part of, rather than discrete from, society, and tend to conceive of social existence mainly in terms of obligation and interdependence rather than rights and responsibilities.

Political dynamics and social order in Korea, which Henderson defines as 'politics of the vortex' and 'mass society,' hinders the growth of a civil society with their undermining efforts for national identity at the national level, and efforts to impede public communication between village and state at the local level.⁶ The interrelationship between a centralized government structure and an aristocratic and hierarchical social system further complicates the simplistic state–society dichotomy. While the centralized bureaucratic monarchy could exercise control over society by coercive and normative inducements, neither kings nor bureaucratic aristocracy could achieve absolute power. The patrimonial social order and Confucian ideology extend and protect central power but at the same time restrain royal authority by keeping the balance of forces between the monarch and the aristocracy. This made it hard for the state to control the actions of the aristocracy. In this case, the state encompassed both the public and private spaces, but state power was not strong enough to penetrate and control society.

In Confucian culture, civil society was seen as a bridge between the family and the state rather than an autonomous arena: it provided 'a variety of mediating cultural institutions' for the dynamic interaction between family and

state (Tu 1999: 12). The Confucian *literati* actively engaged in the establishment and implementation of normative standards for individuals and communities, and the guidance of the state for virtuous ends. In the Confucian scholarly tradition, the school and academies were the relevant infrastructure between family and state (de Bary 1998: 38). Such centers of learning and scholarly discussion, concerned with political matters, had an influence on popular opinion, sufficient to disturb rulers, while their primary functions lay in preparation of students to take the civil service examination. So, the type of consolidation of politics and society in premodern Korea seems to be close to the Durkheimian concept of moral community ruled by mechanical solidarity, where political and other institutions of social life were merged.

The Western liberal concepts of public space, public and citizen draw their social significance from the historically specific institutional constellation of liberal society. In the absence of a history of civil rights struggles, the liberal concept of individual sovereignty was not inculcated in the civil culture. Although there were bottom-up, grass-roots initiatives that led to the articulation of political demands going beyond the local level, a vibrant and responsive civil society with a confident and resourceful public realm was not achieved. South Korea's traditional authoritarian culture and the persistence of traditional patterns and norms of behavior allowed the powerful elite to neutralize political challenges from civil society, while selectively accepting aspects of Western political systems. The relatively weak liberal tradition in Korean political culture and a lack of experience with the ideas and values of modernity have imposed constraints on the rights and liberties of individuals, interfered with freedom of choice and limited the ability to question authority in South Korea's modernization process. Lee attributes a persistent pattern of protest behavior in modern Korea to the lack of a democratic tradition, resulting in a combination of rapidly changing values of the people and less developed political institutions (Lee, A.-R. 1993).

The development of civil society and its role in defining the boundary of a political community depends on the nature of the political regime. The formation of civil society in modern Korea should be considered in the authoritarian and patrimonial cultural contexts where democratic political structures are lacking. In the absence of a developed civil society, the Korean state is able to exert modernizing influences in political, economic and cultural life while reinforcing the traditionalism of Confucian culture. The military government has deployed a range of legal and administrative measures that have effectively suppressed opposition, restricted social freedom and the functions of politically oriented civil society organizations. Opposition is further stifled by the national security ideology as well as the economy-first policy of the state. The oppressive government can take refuge in that the government has generated economic growth and greatly improved the material life of the population.

Success to establish and reproduce civil society depends on agents' engagement, the functions of social institutions and historical contingencies. Several factors have encouraged the development of a civil society, such as democratization, economic liberalization, the development of a middle class and an invigorated

mass media. Despite the normative development within civil society, the South Korean state retains largely its coercive power over the civil sector.⁷ This can be best illustrated in the case of the labor movement and the subsequent response by the state. Although the development of the working class has contributed to the development of democracy, it has not led to a qualitative change in the political orientation of the labor movement, nor has the effectiveness of labor's action against the state strengthened. This can be attributed to the ability of the South Korean state to maintain social solidarity by implementing a state-led, corporatist and nationalist ideology.

In relation to state power, South Korean civil society has been shaped and reshaped. State-led industrialization caused structural transformations in society and changes in classes. The new middle class and expanded working class created the public sphere that evolved in opposition to the state. Intensified industrialization also brought about rapid colonization of the life-world, while increasing the number of interest groups. Civic organizations helped instigate public reforms, fueled the democratization process, and weakened the authoritarian grip on civil society. While civil society was weak and the public sphere shrank under the authoritarian military government, civil society has become an increasingly important agent in defining national boundaries.

The populist *minjung* movement during the 1970s and 1980s in Korea reflects the politics of identity and legitimation in civil society. The ideology of the *minjung* movement has had an inclusionary effect. It provides a space for people to learn a critical viewpoint and rethink their own identities as *minjung* (the subject of history who represents the national identity), and serves as a new vision for an alternative society. The radicalism of the *minjung* movement creates tensions between the middle class and the working class with the fundamental transformation of the class structure. With the forces of democratization, the internal differentiation of civil society in South Korea calls for plural and diverse public realms. In social movements, various social groups struggle to open a public space for their collective interests and identity.

Following on Cohen and Arato's idea of further democratization of society through reconstruction of the concept of civil society, I consider that civil society serves important functions in the construction of democracy. Democratization implies the enhancement of people's participation in the exercise and control of political and economic power at every level. People who used to be part of the hierarchical social relations are inspired to participate in order to prevent the abuse of highly centralized power. In a democratic society, the operationalization of the individual's bounded rationality at any given time is governed by opinions and rules, through which the society can institute itself with the recognition of these rules, norms and values, and their significations (Castoriadis 1997: 338–48). The efforts in Korea to rebuild sound public ethics and civil values using both traditional (Confucian/Shamanistic) elements and liberal principles can be understood in the same context.⁸

How is communicative action possible where a variety of movements or civic groups exist? In social movements, purposive-rational action often overrules

communicative action because leaders tend to strategize their movements to meet political goals. However, this does not completely exhaust the possibility of free and open communication. Civil society is a political realm in which people can reflect on themselves and their relations to others in a range of various social, political–economic and cultural practices. In relation to civil society, social movements can be considered as communicative institutions that play a symbolic role in the definition and reconstitution of social solidarity supporting a coherent civil society.

As well observed in South Korea, civil society limits state power, stimulates democratic participation, alleviates political polarization and fosters plurality. The ability of civil society to serve these functions depends on a number of factors, including the objectives of civil society groups, the level of institutional organization, its internal democratic character and the extent to which it encourages public participation. The democratic development of civil society in Korea has been fashioned through its experience of modernity where tensions are revealed between the impulse to achieve modernity via liberal democracy and its own cultural values and moralities. Contrary to their espoused democratic values, many civil society groups and organizations in Korea are hierarchical in their structure and male-centered, which attributed to the Confucian influence and often involve in hegemonic competition among themselves (Kim, H. R. 2002). However, the Korean tradition is not absolutely antithetical to democracy and pluralism. Thornton (1998) sees Kim Dae Jung's Korean model of democracy as a 'third culture' alternative to that 'other post.' It goes beyond East Asian exceptionalism and reconciles the deep roots of Korean and East Asian political cultural tradition with liberal values. While new forms of social and political organization stimulate the ideology of equal opportunities and the awareness of social injustices, cultural traditions have provided a new ground for the interpretation of a productive, dynamic and democratic social system. Thus, a civil society can be (re)built through the transformation of socio-cultural traditions.

2. The dimension of cultural imaginary

(1) A cultural turning point

Habermas' notion of reason is bound to the dominating impulses of Enlightenment rationality. He argues that the universality of the standards of rationality is built into human discourse faculty. By rationality he means in part a willingness to press things discursively. He presupposes a discourse context in which all the participants have equal access to pragmatically defined dialog roles. In this 'ideal speech situation,' all have equal capacity and power to assert and challenge claims to truth, sincerity and moral correctness and to recommend practical policies. These are the universal presuppositions of communicative interaction.

Habermas' proposition must be read as a conceptual argument. Although he is aware of the hermeneutic dimension of human interests,⁹ his metaphilosophical concerns are deeper than practical ones. Habermas assumes that morally justified

norms are synonymous with truly generalizable interests. However, there is a gap between utopian notions of emancipatory knowledge and practice. Human interests often go beyond the boundary of social norms. Habermas does not do justice to different modes of thought and diverse forms of life as different ways of filling in the ethical space. He under-appreciates the cultural constructedness and symbolic basis of the bifurcation between theory (consciousness) and practice (experience). While Habermas' Enlightenment rationality can be understood as an effort to further human emancipation through critical self-reflection via communicative action and discourse ethics, his European logocentrism invites the concept of interculturality to provide a universal, rational and objective basis for social norms.

In this context, Weber's perception of culture is useful for rethinking a Eurocentric rationality that absorbs one's own and other cultures into a common order. Weber embodies the paradox of modernity by accepting both the meaninglessness of a disenchanted world and a belief in a hermeneutical self; that is to say, in a personality capable of inventing meaningful interpretations of existence (1974: 77–156). Weber traces the modern crisis of meaning to the internal movement of Occidental religions, whose drive to make sense of the world is accompanied by a gradual rationalization that eventually undermines the quest for transcendence.

This is further aggravated by the existence of the modern self in the rationalized environment of capitalism, bureaucracy and science. Under the conditions of modernity, one's personality is increasingly positioned between conflicting domains of action and value. Within this context, Weber concludes that the only hope for establishing a sense of meaning is to be found in the inter-subjective spheres of politics and the human sciences. However, Weber's attitude towards the concept of culture is ambivalent. He sees a crisis of meaning in modern society due to the impossibility of constructing a comprehensive world-view within the context of an increasingly fragmented and complex culture. At the same time, he is also aware of the other dimension of culture that enables a consciousness to create meaning(s) and thus to articulate or reintegrate the world.

We are now aware that society and culture have been the heterogeneous products of various people with different backgrounds of cultures, traditions and institutions. A critical hermeneutic approach can be used as the most apt response to this contemporary dilemma. Alternative approaches based on self-reflection and hermeneutics consider the concept of culture as an unfolding hermeneutic process. The hermeneutic approach takes into account the context and history in understanding the basis of an institutional framework. Hermeneutics offers a bridge between conceptual thought and subjective experience and can provide a new model for emancipatory or utopian meaning. Harrison, for instance, argues that 'only a non-reductive, socio-historically open conception of culture can capture the narrative condition of man, and that hermeneutics is the most fruitful approach' (1989: 77).

However, 'culture' refers not just to the hermeneutic (interpretative) dimension of humans' relation with the world, but also to a radical relativity of all human

constructs and of reality itself. In the context of cultural self-determination, the recognition of the plural existence of ways of interpretation leads to the possibility of diverse and wide-open horizons of self-construction. Joel Kahn argues for an inclusive and hermeneutic discourse of culture and alterity, which he associates with what he calls a 'hermeneutic language of difference' (1995: 136–8). However, as Kahn observes, even post-modern and post-colonial theories that speak for difference and cultural diversity tend to use the 'anthropological language of difference,' for they speak from a privileged position external to what they claim to represent. How then can it be possible to (re)construct various levels or dimensions of communication and meaning that exist simultaneously in a dialog? Disclosing the dimensions and interactions between them can reveal the complexity or multivocality of the dialog in an encounter between cultures and civilizations.

Taylor criticizes acultural accounts of modernity that obscure major differences between Western and other cultures, resulting in mistaken self-understanding (1995: 24–33). According to Taylor, acultural theories view modernization as a loss of old beliefs due to a rise in instrumental rationality or to social developments, such as increased mobility, concentration of populations and industrialization. The modern belief in rational individuals with neutral self-understanding who define their own relations to others and to the good is not simply the result of discarding traditional beliefs. Rather, it is a part of particular, culturally specific constellation of understanding and social imaginary.

At this point, it is worthwhile to recall the discussion of Arnason's attempt at linking Castoriadis' analysis of imaginary significations to the theory of culture, and his view on the world-articulating role of imaginary significations (Arnason 1989a; see Chapter 1). Imaginary significations are complexes of meaning organized as symbolic networks that allow a space for not only a plurality of interpretation of the world but also a transformation of it. As a means of acting on the world in order to transform it, imaginary significations function as cultural interpretations of power. Yet, the consequences of that power are realized only through the context in which they are carried out. These dimensions of culture enable social agents to act to effect transformations of the world, and so themselves.

Consequently, imaginary significations play a significant role in the creation of meaning and the symbolic order of society. For Castoriadis, imaginary significations are a radical challenge to inherited thinking, and as an alternative to the cognitive interpretation of culture. Drawing on this point, Arnason emphasizes the world-constitutive or world-disclosing aspects of cultural patterns, which can be clearly seen through a comparative analysis of civilizations (1992: 247–67). The autonomy of interpretation is more obvious when civilizational encounters involve intercultural communication. Interculturality reveals different cultural articulations of the world through which we can broaden the imaginary significations of modernity. It is in this context that an emerging comparative cultural hermeneutics can be understood as a result of our critical engagement in the self-thematization of modernity.

(2) Asian values: political ideology or cultural rhetoric?

Contemporary Asian values are both a response to the global changes of modernity and a cultural expression of modernity. The discourse of Asian values is a good example of socio-cultural creativity. It links to an effort to invent different paths to modernity and patterns of modernity in non-Western civilizations. The emphasis on Asian values does not reflect a desire to return to the past; it is a reinterpretation of significant cultural legacies, in an effort to bridge the gap between the change in political/economic institutions and socio-cultural transformation.

'Asian values' in contemporary society is often understood as an example of how presuppositions and meanings are determined by (ongoing) interpretation. In this section, I want to challenge that. Since symbols persist while their meanings change, presuppositions and meanings are open to redefinition through interpretation. We need to understand how values get (re)defined by material processes in an increasingly integrated globe, and that we are all products of histories that are intimately intertwined and mutually shaped. Here, it may be useful to employ the concept of 'culture as text or practice' (Geertz 1973; Bourdieu 1984).¹⁰ From a 'culture as text' perspective, the primary question is how to interpret 'Asian values' (cultural text) within their social and historical contexts; that is, how societies deal culturally with the challenges of modernity, and how some cultural rhetoric (or policies) are able to generate more meaning than others. From the point of view of practice, culture can be seen as a symbolic form of social power, including social meanings and routines. This reflects the complicated relationship between culture and power; how cultural meanings and values fluctuate in the real-world politics and economy.

Then, the question arises: Are there 'values' that are unique to 'Asia' or 'Asians?' Certainly the concept of 'Asian values' is an artificial construct which was invented to justify a particular mode of development in East Asia (Moody 1996: 166–92). This construct also functions as an ideological instrument for the state to legitimize their authoritarian rule in the name of traditional values (Robinson 1996). This begs the question: are 'Asian values' in a position to contest the ideological construction of 'universal human rights?'

To begin with, there is one striking difference between the two concepts. 'Asian values' are used very selectively as a particularistic set of values while 'human rights' are claimed as a universalistic (or ultimate) value system. Human rights discourse focuses on the rights of the individual, while Asian ('Confucian') values are based on relationships between human beings, between the self and others. The former might seem, at first sight, to go beyond our daily life because it is already seemingly inherent in nature. The latter, on the other hand, is characteristically introduced to penetrate the life-world, where people prescribe rights and duties to others according to different social contexts. Hence, the former functions with the rule of law while the other depends on the logic of human relations. But how can we be sure about whether only human beings have absolute rights? The basic rights of every human being to life, liberty, freedom of thought and expression are, as defenders of human rights discourse would claim,

immutable and universal. However, there seems no such absolute rights that privilege only human beings.¹¹ We can talk about rights only in different milieus of social actions.¹²

While it is true that an appropriately sanitized version of Confucianism lends itself particularly well to the 'Asian values' discourses, the latter can also be articulated from non-Confucian perspectives as is the case in Malaysia (see Kahn 1997).¹³ For understanding the implications of the 'Asian values' discourse, it seems useful to discuss the different aspects of Confucian tradition. Within Confucianism, there is, as with Liberalism, an idea of 'equality,' but it has different connotations. In the Confucian context, 'equality' means a harmonious relationship based on social status; everyone has an 'equal right' to the maintenance of his or her given status.¹⁴ Confucianism has been a status-preserving ideology in hierarchical and monarchical agrarian political systems in East Asia. Its confrontation with modernity has led it in a number of directions, not the least of which is modernist (industrial)-Confucianism in contemporary Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. According to Aseniero, what we often cite as 'Asian values' is 'vulgar' Confucianism (1994: 317–21). The benefit of these values for the state and productional capital is that they contribute to the high productivity in labor-intensive manufacturing industries (Tai 1989). Confucianism is reinterpreted in such a way that the traditional value system provides the motivation and foundation for modernization, with some aspects of it modified, making such values more compatible with modern conditions.

While Confucianism is regarded as a common cultural trait in the East Asian region, there are different versions of Confucianism. Rozman focuses on the cultural dynamics in the East Asian region and finds a common heritage of these Confucian traditions. He classifies five types of Confucian traditions (imperial, reform, elite, merchant-house and mass Confucianism) and draws on the different aspects and common elements of Confucianism through a comparison of Japan and China (Rozman 1991a: 157–203). There is, however, a Sino-centric tendency in Rozman's framework as Arnason reveals (1998a: 47). Rozman's direct comparison of five traditions in China and Japan overlooks the different historical conditions and cultural currents of each country. Arnason's remarks on imperial Confucianism in Japan are insightful: 'a mandate of heaven' of Confucian principle is contrasted with 'a descent from heaven' of symbolic Japanese tradition. Although Rozman is correct in his account of the internal pluralism of Confucianism, he seems to dismiss the specific characteristics of Japanese tradition in which a new synthesis of Neo-Confucianism, Shinto and Buddhism shows its own dynamics of transformation in Japanese civilization.

As for Korean Confucianism, not included in Rozman's comparison, there are features of variation off the Chinese model. In Korea, there was no equivalent to the Japanese imperial institution but an adoption of the Sinified concept of 'mandate of heaven': the Choson dynasty modeled itself on Ming China's social system, and identified itself as a 'small China.' Korea was subordinated to the Chinese imperial order and its socio-cultural influence, but was able to retain its political sovereignty. Unlike Japan, Korea adopted China's centralized examination

system for selection of government officials and (re)invented its own version of aristocratic bureaucracy. The upper strata of society (*yangban* aristocracy) exploited the Confucian doctrine and associated social institutions, e.g. family, education and the state, to consolidate their privileges as a ruling class.¹⁵ The complete Confucianization of Korean society contributed to the relatively weak components of reformist and merchant versions of Confucianism and to the great strength of elite Confucianism.

Although Confucian tradition both as an institution and as a system of values can be an obstacle to modern development as many might believe, a set of international and historical factors brought about revolutionary changes in the realm of religion that made it compatible with industrialization and economic development. These changes include the reshaping of the religion–state/society relationship, epitomized in the dis-establishment of Confucianism and the reconfiguration of Confucian values, resulting from the reinvigoration of traditional culture (religion). There is a close relationship between the use of Confucian values for modern development and adaptation of Confucian values by the state. It was also the autonomous capacities of society that allowed new interpretations of Confucian values in economic development.

Being relatively late industrializers, the East Asian countries needed a strong state to achieve industrialization in a very short period. Authoritarian governments used cultural strategies to compete successfully with and resist the economic dominance of more advanced countries in the free-trade economic system. East Asian countries have a cultural heritage that stresses the importance of particularistic values over universalistic values and the primacy of the rule of human relationships over the rule of law. States and elites utilized cultural traditions to their benefits. Relational ties, the marginalization of formal law and an authoritarian model of government are considered important for the spectacular growth in the region by the so-called proponents of authoritarianism. It is here that cultural hegemony and political power converge.

Until very recently, the rhetoric of ‘Asian values’ has, to some extent, been deployed by Asian states as a post-colonial ideology against Western neocolonialism. The more the newly industrialized countries (NICs) achieved economic development, the more intensely they turned to the Asian values discourse. The rhetoric of ‘Asian values,’ however, is losing its validity as well as authenticity in the face of the recent financial turmoil in the region. As the currencies in the region have sharply devalued, so too have the political hubris and cultural hegemony proclaimed under the name of ‘Asian values.’ Moreover, democratization and other social movements, such as trade unionism, human rights and environmentalist groups, proliferated as East Asian states strived for upward mobility.¹⁶ However, this cannot entirely invalidate the notion of Asian values. While changing social economic conditions and emerging liberal values have seemed to tarnish their significations, ‘Asian values’ have provided a moral and philosophical foundation for East Asian modernization.

The Confucian revival in East Asian countries reinforces a commonly held belief that the search for one’s cultural roots is vital to modern consciousness.

To do justice to the different experiences of modernity, it is necessary to recognize the widely varying historical and institutional settings of each society. East Asian countries have undergone different processes of reform or transformation of the Confucian tradition. The diverse forms of Confucianism in the region speak of variations of the logic of modernity.

(3) The significance of cultural imaginary: the case of South Korea

Having discussed some general issues of cultural traditions, let me now turn to specific, and in my view, problematic, aspects of the cultural tradition in relation to Korea's modernity and modernization and the possibilities inherent in its social-historical imagination. The key issue here is how a society relates its existing cultural and institutional traditions to a new social imagination. In the South Korean case, at least in part, the social institutions of modernity are constructed by the Confucian imaginary. Consider first the cultural aspects of South Korean political economic development. The South Korean state implements a self-reproductive ideological agenda in social practice, particularly in education. Morality based on Confucian ethics is incorporated into politics for the restriction of individual autonomy.

Perhaps one of the most serious problems was (and is) the endemic corruption which has been a major part of both economic development and the current economic crisis. The extent of corruption cannot be measured by statistics. Corruption is a phenomenon deeply embedded in Korean social norms, based on a personalistic ethic – the obligatory exchange of favors derived from interpersonal relationships (see Chang 1991: 106–29; Chang, C. *et al.* 2001).¹⁷ In other words, part of the reason for South Korea's systematic corruption lies in its traditional culture of reciprocity. Koreans are bound together by a complex web of loyalty to a group or person. Corruption has been prevalent at all levels of public office, institutions and individual groupings making up the patronage networks. The corruption cases in South Korea reveal that it is not an insignificant phenomenon, but an endemic social problem that is even institutionalized.¹⁸ The reason for this can be found in such historical factors as the long duration of monarchical rule, the vestiges of Japanese colonial rule, past military regimes' relentless pursuit of economic growth, and the manipulated application of Confucian principles. Corruption can be seen as 'deeply integrated into the particular path of political and economic development' (Moran 1999: 569).¹⁹ The political ordering of corruption and patron-client relations that manifests in the adhesion of politics to the economy has important effects on the configurations and dynamics of Korean modernization (see Chapter 7).

What is particularly interesting here is that corruption is also connected with familism, since it is supported by family-centered Confucian values. If we look at the structure of big businesses in South Korea, most chaebols are run by family members (Chang 1997a: 57). Chaebol leaders are used to making deals and getting loans based on family relationships, friendships and school or regional ties. Chaebol families often shunned heavy equity financing for fear of losing

family control of their sprawling businesses (Lee 1997: 30–2). As revealed in the current economic crisis, debts sometimes soared to over 600 times higher than capital equity. Ownership and management are often not separate; the irrational extension of companies through enormous bank loans, for example, may be blamed on ‘family-egoism.’²⁰

There is a strong tendency towards Confucianism in South Korea’s political culture. For example, former President Chun was exiled to a Buddhist monastery²¹ for more than a year after apologizing to the nation for his wrongdoing during his tenure, and the former presidential candidate, Lee Hoi Chang, in the presidential election in December 1997, sent his eldest son, an American-educated economist, to a leper colony as a volunteer to cool down the public anger against his two sons’ draft-dodging. The ex-presidents Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung also had to apologize to the nation over their sons’ financial scandals. In those cases, what really mattered to the public was the moral legitimacy of the government. Ethics and morality are an integral part of Korean political culture. The rule of law seems to be less important than the moral consensus between the ruler and the ruled, and public opinion often confused legitimacy and morality. The influence of Confucianism, as we have seen, is still strong in spite of the dramatic changes in society and social values.

Familism is particularly important in this respect. Understanding the socio-cultural characteristics and organizational structure of family is crucial in understanding the social order in South Korea. Although the cultural context of family life has changed, family relations still play a significant role in enhancing the opportunities of capital accumulation and power acquisition. Unlike the traditional one, though, modern familism is based on direct family members and close friends in the social network. The boundaries of social relations have expanded as society has become more urbanized, expanded and embedded in the world economy, while the radius of trusteeship has narrowed.

Today globalization allows freer movement of capital between nation-states. The more freely capital flows, the more eroded the social bonds between people tend to become. In the new global economic order where trade liberalization, privatization and deregulation are the order of the day, the ability of the state to control public culture has been reduced. South Korea becomes increasingly enmeshed in the web of global political, economic and cultural systems. Individualism flourishes thanks to the expansion of education, media and the rise of living conditions. Familial ideology may change its function and family values may become less relevant or effective because of the changes in Korean family and social structures – an increase in life expectancy, a decrease in family size and more female employment.

The destruction of familism must be read with caution. The increase in cultural diversity has accelerated the breakdown of modern Korea’s cultural establishment. In the process of capitalist modernization and rapidly accelerating consumerism and materialism, a new Korean cultural identity is in the process of being born under the banners of globalization and ‘Koreanization,’ emphasizing the symbolic values of filial piety and responsibility. New survival logic,

combined with capitalist competition, has been built around family egoism and nationalism.

Global processes are also forcing industrial societies to converge in nearly every conceivable way. Expanding communication technologies enable greater global interaction and thereby cultural convergence becomes easier than before. We can cross historical cultural time and space with greater ease. It is also true that the increasing dominance of the West brought about the domination of Western culture in communication networks. But cultural shaping is multimodal: complex historical, social, political and economic variables make individuals in any one particular society modify their directions and have the same cultural directions. In our daily lives, cultural power (cultural capital) seems to be embodied in long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body like a habit, and at the same time objectified in cultural goods and institutionalized through social mechanisms such as education or entertainment. Koreans may be moving towards a Western cultural direction, and Western cultural products and cultural tastes. However, this does not mean that they will lose their cultural identity and become assimilated to Western culture. Likewise, familism will not perish in the near future, in spite of 'hyper' differentiation, rationalization and commodification in Korean culture.

For example, Sorensen (1988) demonstrates how Korean families in a rural mountain village have adapted to profound economic and demographic changes while remaining recognizably Korean.²² There is a pattern of migration from the village to cities for education and employment. In Sorensen's view, migration does not threaten the family system so much, but rather, it arms the family with a new strategy. Industrialization and urbanization have affected the social structure as a whole, but the basic social organizational principles in a village can still be maintained through adaptation. The circumstances under which advantaged and disadvantaged families send children to the cities seem to suggest long-term decisions about the allocation of family labor and capital based on family interest.²³ What Sorensen shows is that as long as the family labor farm is able to achieve the main goal of family welfare, there is no need for any fundamental change in social structure, and the social organizational principles in the village can be based still on the Confucian ethic.

A further issue about cultural tradition in Korea, as anywhere else, is that culture is manipulated and used not only by the state and elite but also by the people. As Janelli and Yim (1993) argue, traditional organizations, institutions, social norms and values are interpreted differently depending on the social position of the interpreter. This kind of view broadens the understanding of South Korean capitalism and corporate culture. Janelli's analysis of Korean corporate culture reflects the 'flexibility' of culture in a rapidly changing society with multiple identities. What he shows, in his analysis of Taesong's corporate culture, is how local cultures shape capitalism in their own way. The traditional farming cooperative tradition has been adapted to the modern capitalist structure, and South Korean capitalism has consequently been constructed and reconstructed through contests over symbolic and material resources. Through Janelli and Yim's understanding of culture, we can contest the notion of culture as unproblematically shared.

What we see here is that the conventional dichotomy of ‘tradition’ and ‘modern’ is a misleading way of analyzing the particular social transformation that has taken place in South Korea. Traditional values, attitudes and beliefs have been closely intertwined with the processes of modernization and state formation, and have been utilized by the state, by nationalists and by those in opposition to the state’s allocation of privilege and power. Culture tends to be perceived as a by-product of material social processes or as a process determined by hegemony and conflict. However, the relatively autonomous role of culture in defining and interpreting shared symbols and values needs to be considered. The rhetoric of Asian values reflects particular visions of modernization processes set by political elites. Bringing the concepts of human agency and civil society into the civilizational approach provides not only the interpretative resources, but also new societal projects, for an alternative path to and through modernity.

Part III

Capitalist development

5 The historical sociology of Korea's modernization

In Part III, I will focus on the impact of Korean modernity and modernization directly on economic development. After the Korean War, the country was reconstructed in the collective imagination – rich in human resources and empty of natural resources. Industrialization was regarded as a means of nation building as much as for its own worth. Economic development has been the primary goal of South Korean modernization. The rhetoric of progress was presented in terms of inevitability, despite all the crises that it helped engender. Elements from the cultural and economic–structural systems are interrelated in various forms within the civilizational complex. Before attempting to explain the South Korean capitalist development in Chapters 6 and 7, it seems appropriate to give a brief overview of the early modernization discourse and the process of South Korean modernization.

1. The historical trajectory of Korean modernization

(1) Early modernization discourse

Discussion of early modernization discourse in Korea would perhaps need to start with the role of Japanese colonization (1910–45) in the shaping of modern Korea. The Japanese colonial government imposed an imperial version of modernization and laid the foundation for a modern economic infrastructure in Korea – a railway network, improved agricultural techniques, a proper land survey, and a telecommunications network (Foster-Carter 1987: 8; Yang 1999: 161–88). Korea was rapidly industrialized to fulfill Japan's imperial demands under the project of the Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. The Japanese colonial rule provided more accommodation and infrastructural development, and contributed to the unbalanced and incoherent characteristic of Korean modernization.

As Korea's modernization began with Japanese colonization, it generated reactionary arguments by Korean nationalists who criticized 'old Korea' as backward and weak. Throughout this period of colonialism, Korea's visions of modernization were closely linked to nationalism and went beyond the colonial rule (Shin and Robinson 1999).¹ Korean nationalists tried to reform social, political, economic and educational systems and 'enlighten' Koreans to a new form

of consciousness. Here, the narrative of tradition became the subject of critical examination. Tradition was both criticized and romanticized in different ways. Tradition was blamed for corruption, factional wrangling, the exhaustion of national power and a foreign policy that led to the Japanese rule. At the same time, tradition was romanticized, and used in the development of a national consciousness sought for long-standing nationalist rebellions against Japanese invasions such as the Tonghak revolution in 1894.

Among the theories of capitalist development in Korea, there were different interpretations with regard to the role of the colonial state and the characteristics of Korea's nascent capitalism (McNamara 1990; Eckert 1991; Suh 1996). Through the debates over the development of colonial society, there arose a 'colonial perspective' that portrayed the Choson society as economically stagnant. A Marxist perspective challenged this, linking Choson society as a stagnant structure to imperialism and semi-feudalism.² This perspective was superseded by a nationalist position, which reformulated the relation of stagnation and progressive tendency in Choson society. In this view, it was the colonial rule that created uneven and distorted development and disarticulation. Dependency theories substantiated the nationalist idea of colonial disruption by pointing to the unequal specialization and imbalances in trade between developed and underdeveloped countries.

McNamara applied the concept of dependent capitalism, in contrast to comprador capitalism, to explain the development of Korean colonial capitalism (McNamara 1988: 1990). The successful indigenous entrepreneurs were not working for Japanese enterprises or for Japanese national interests, but invested in their own local enterprises. McNamara noted the efficient and effective state intervention in the economy and few large family-owned conglomerates have their origins in the Japanese colonial period. Native capital expanded along with Japanese capital and adapted to colonial state policy (McNamara 1990: 127).

In addition, there was increasing investment in the colonial Korean economy from many Japanese looking for economic opportunities, along with the expansionist policies of the Japanese empire. Large capital flows and the introduction of management techniques and modern manufacturing technology provided the impetus for colonial Korea to achieve rapid industrial development. This in turn influenced the priorities and policies of the colonial government. The success of indigenous enterprises was limited, however, and their contribution to national interest and development was doubtful under the strong colonial state and Japanese conglomerates (*zaibatsu*).

According to McNamara, the limited development of native capital was largely the result of this opportunity structure, rather than that of an oppressive structure of underdevelopment (1990: 34–8). During this period the main agent of development was neither merchants nor landed capital, but the colonial state whose bureaucratic control infiltrated deeply into rural areas. This industrial structure created restricted development options for native capitalists, with these options being determined mostly by the colonial state. This was one of the main reasons why colonial Korea could rapidly expand capitalist relations of

production and develop industries without a fundamental change of the rural class structure.

McNamara's approach, which seems close to the 'colonial mobilization model' (Suh 1996: 184), incorporates historical diversity and contingency with the international and military situation at that time.³ Colonial Korean development became directly linked with the imperial wars and with the development of Japanese capitalism. Conflicts existed between Japan and the Western imperial powers, and Japan needed to develop colonial Korea as a military and material base for mobilization. Korea was used as a strategic manufacturing center for Japan in line with the expansionist ambitions of the Japanese empire (Cumings 1989).

Duus (1995) follows a similar line. Japanese imperialism under the Meiji government was formulated as a response to the intrusion of the Western imperialists into East Asia. He further argues that Meiji industrialization did not necessarily lead Japan into imperialism. According to Duus, the annexation of Korea reflects the logic of the international system of the late nineteenth century, contingent political developments in Japan at the time, such as the failure of Ito Hirobumi's reform policy, and unsuccessful collaboration efforts with the Korean leadership (1995: 198–9). Despite Duus' elaborate explanation of the annexation process, his view seems biased towards Japan's standpoint. Given Japan's desire for hegemonic power in the region and its military capacity, Japan's annexation was more their own security need than as a result of any imputed failure of the Meiji leaders' moderate policy of helping Korea to undertake reform.

In addition to Korea's geopolitical position, and the political and economic feasibility of a particular style of imperial expansion, social factors within the colony have to be taken into account. Eckert focuses on the colonial state's orientation towards economic development and the creation of a native capitalist class. In his biographical study of Koch'ang Kim, he stresses the continuity between colonial and post-colonial Korean economic structure, noting the common elements in both the development models: 'the pivotal economic function of the state, the concentration of private economic power in the hands of a small number of large business groups or chaebol (zaibatsu), the emphasis on exports, and the threat or actuality of war as a stimulus for economic growth' (1991: 255). While certain aspects of the colonial capitalist legacy continued in the post-war development, the characteristics of the capitalist developmentalist state in modern Korea stem from the colonial state and beyond, from its long tradition of patrimonial bureaucracy (Lee 1997). The efficient state bureaucracy and state-business relations during the colonial period have had long-lasting effects on modern Korean economic organization. The structural weakness of the landed and capitalist classes in the colony led them to integrate, in an atomistic manner, into the periphery of the colonial system.⁴ This explains in part how the authoritarian bureaucratic state came to enjoy considerable autonomy after the scourge of colonial humiliation and the ravages of civil war. It then implies that the pattern of South Korean capitalist development is a successful reformulation of the colonial development model and that of Meiji Japan, along with its own cultural and institutional legacies.

Some other scholars problematized the development of colonial Korean society, linking the uniqueness of the colonial government and society to the construction of a unique form of colonial modernity (Shin and Robinson 1999). For them, colonial Korean society was neither an underdeveloped society nor a dependent society ruled by colonial hegemony. The path of social and industrial development in colonial Korea was shaped in the interaction of various historical, social, political and economic forces inside and outside Korea. As Shin and Robinson argue, a dynamic and interactive approach is more helpful than binary constructions of nationalist narratives for an understanding of the divergent aspects of colonial modernity (Shin and Robinson 1999: 5–6). Within the colonial structure, the Korean people were mobilized, exploited and assimilated, and at the same time they were not passive recipients of modernity. Some embraced a time of multiple possibilities, albeit unevenly distributed, despite the confusion and sufferings inflicted on them (Kang 2001; Robinson 1999; Yang 1999).

(2) Post-war modernization discourse in South Korea

After liberation (1945) from Japan, Korea was divided into North and South, and the two Korean states turned into ‘client states’ of the United States and Soviet Union. The United States played a major role in the modernization of post-colonial South Korea, and reinforced a form of dependent development in South Korea. This is a reinterpretation of the dependency theory from a nationalist perspective. Lim (1985) adopted Evans’ dependent development approach and employed it to explain the character of the post-colonial capitalist development in South Korea. Lim distinguishes the colonial from post-colonial structure as a shift from classic dependency to dependent development. Post-liberation capitalism reflects in Korea’s counter-responses to the external power, the US and the organization of the state system as a strategy of dependent development, while the colonial capitalism carried the characteristics of the traditional dependency structure in relation to Japan. The theory of post-colonial capitalism resulted from an effort to explain South Korea as a late-modernization model for Third World countries, a model that generated a drastic transition of Korea from one of the poorest countries in the world to a rapidly developing nation.

The process of rapid industrialization illustrated by the South Korean model of modernization has been acclaimed by both Korean and Western scholars. What is important here is the cleavage that existed between theory and practice. Theoretically, the model of modernization was the American one. But in practice, the developmental strategies were influenced more by Japan’s developmental model. South Korea incorporated elements of both the American liberalist model and the Japanese state-led developmental model into its development experience. In the legal and political systems, South Korea adopted the American model, whereas in the economic system it followed primarily the Japanese model, one that proved more efficient for the latecomers in industrialization.

In the social and cultural dimensions, however, South Korea found a new dynamic in cultural traditions that were utilized for mobilizing people. This factor

added a conflicting element to South Korean modernization. The very success of economic modernization made the real and potential roles of cultural traditions more visible. It is generally presumed that South Korea's modernity is mixed with elements of tradition. However, it can also be seen as new forms of modernization, shaped by the contingencies and the complexities of internal and external conditions. What is most needed in this regard is self-reflexivity by which we can ask questions about the characteristics of modernity and its consequences. So far, the Western (American) model of modernization has overshadowed, at least on a superficial level, Koreans' consciousness and discourses. For many South Koreans, America was seen as a 'liberator' who helped free Korea from colonial hardship, and the image of America was the epitome of the modern world.

In the social dimension, imported American culture, along with the enormous quantity of aid goods, marginalized and diminished the significance of indigenous Korean culture. Despite its hegemonizing power, American culture did not fit easily into the Korean context. What transpired was an ambivalent attitude towards foreign cultures. Sometimes, Korean masses have shown an uncritical submission to foreign powers (*Sadae* principle: 'serving the great'), and at the same time they have demonstrated an extreme nationalism to the point of xenophobia.

At the institutional level, industrialization was driven by the desire for economic growth. The confrontation with North Korea intensified such a desire, as it would provide a safeguard to national existence and security. On this point, the narrative of modernization in South Korea was subsumed by an ideology of anti-communism. The military government monopolized all ideological resources and dominated the ideological discourse. The ideology of anti-communism swept away other dimensions of modernity, creating tensions between the underdeveloped and (over)developed social institutions. There is also a fundamental ideological difference between the North and South. The Cold War global system continued to produce and reproduce the divided subsystems in the Korean peninsula, in which the two different subsystems function as something of an organic whole for the maintenance and reproduction of each system (Paik 1998: 2000).

In short, it seems that the South Korean modernization is characterized by particularly acute tensions and discrepancies between effective strategies of development and ideological discourses about them. This begins in the colonial phase, with the alienation of cultural nationalism from Japanese-controlled development for Japanese purposes. After the Korean War, the official ideology was theoretically aligned with American hegemony while in practice it followed the Japanese developmentalist strategies. For critics and oppositional forces, the analysis of the dominant developmental model was overly influenced by the ideological facade, and this led them, at least in part, to adopt Marxist perspectives that added complexity and tensions between the ideas and discourses about South Korean modernization.

These ideological and discursive dynamics left a greater impact on Korean modernization than material and functional dynamics. The success story of South Korean economic development allowed the continuation of dependence upon authoritarian governments, and demanded enormous sacrifice from its

people and the environment. Many South Koreans have become disillusioned with the pseudo-imagery of modernization. The democratic government, in the line of globalization and neo-liberalism, failed to deliver reform of the socio-economic system.⁵ It is at this critical historical juncture that we need to (re)problematize the modern project; for without considering the historical and cultural context that helped shape the characteristics of Korean modernization, the interpretation and explanation of Korean modernization would miss the various layers of meaning and the manifold aspects of modernity.

2. The South Korean project of modernization

South Korea has pursued a project of modernization based on a number of development strategies for industrialization, urbanization and capitalization. The fragmented reality of Korean society today, however, does not fit the ideal view of modern society. Modernization and dependency theories capture only parts of the whole, while leaving important issues – such as the distribution of power, the reconstruction of traditions and forms of resistance – unanalyzed. The complexity of Korean society can be understood only in a dynamic and interactive framework that takes into consideration the internal relations between economics, politics and culture.⁶

(1) Socioeconomic dimensions of modernization

The experience of South Korean modernization shows that societies do not always follow the trajectory of others. The path taken towards industrialization reflects a different combination of technological and social determinants in a country. As we can see in the South Korean case, it has not repeated the early experience of industrialization of the advanced countries. Technical and social conditions of capitalist industrial production have changed significantly over time. These changes have meant that the political and ideological conditions required for sustained industrial growth have also varied over time. South Korea's selective imitation and export-oriented strategies have helped to achieve relatively successful economic growth over the last four decades. However, the prevailing social structures as the legacies of her past prevented South Korea from following the same patterns of industrialization and development experienced in other more early industrialized countries. The choice of development strategy is a political choice. In the case of South Korea, it brought about a unique form of social control and sharp cleavages between different sectors of society. It also enhanced certain types of social relations, manifested in a cozy relationship between government and a few select business groups.

The basic objective of the state is to secure its own power and legitimacy. The politics of industrialization must be seen as a struggle throughout society to forge a systematic way of structuring social relations. When the South Korean regime dominated capital accumulation, the agricultural cooperative system was used by the state to maintain rural political support to solve its legitimacy crisis. The need

to find a solution to the political problem of legitimacy led the South Korean government to adopt a specific policy of export-led industrialization.

This can be seen in the relationship between agriculture and industrial development. From the early stages of industrialization, the relatively successful land reforms reduced the average size of individual farms, and prevented landowners from being a significant political force. The main role for the agricultural sector was pressed to supply produce, to serve as a source of labor power, and to support the demand for consumer goods. But it has also been protected until very recently, in order to control oversupply in the labor market and control wages.

'Industrial orders' are shaped by the ways in which political leaders deal with their historically specific problems of legitimacy, and by the capacity of various social groups to access power and wealth. In South Korea, such capacity has been embodied in state power through the modernization process, and through the political structure of society. The way power came to be centralized in the state was also partially determined by specific cultural conditions. Given the power of political elites and state officials, these groups have substantially shaped access to the economic opportunities that came with industrialization. Not only did they determine the economic fate of various social groups, but their political actions led to regional antagonism. The imbalances of social and economic development among the regions were caused by political actions.⁷

In late industrialization, the role of the industrial bourgeoisie as an active agent of social and economic change tends to be complicated. The Korean case shows that efficient industrial entrepreneurs can be created by state policies. In turn, the activities of such entrepreneurs, in cooperation with the state in establishing industries, help create and sustain a new middle class. The South Korean state was able to form its own organizations and policies independent of civil groups, owing to the lack of effective social pressures at the political level. Incorporating civil groups into state-controlled organizations, the state was able to shape class formation and group interactions.

In a similar vein, Korzeniewicz and Korzeniewicz argue that rapid economic growth in postwar South Korea is a consequence of the consolidation of a collective interaction between a strong state and an emerging industrial class (1992: 81–97). As in other newly industrialized countries (NICs), the South Korean government has played a key role in directing capitalism for rapid economic development.⁸ Under monopoly capitalist development, a powerful developmentalist state was able to maintain economic stability and stringent labor control. The state has an exceptional level of 'relative autonomy' (Evans 1987: 203–226; Cumings 1987: 71). By (re)producing its power through sustained economic growth, the South Korean state was able to penetrate into all social structures and cultural spheres.

The rapid process of industrialization in South Korea caused complex social changes. People responded to these changes in various ways in search of security as well as opportunities for social mobility. This experience governed Korean lives and consolidated a 'developmental psychology,' which has continued to motivate people in their everyday lives. Economic growth, and the associated

promotion of the ideology of development, has been a powerful social and cultural force that has reshaped almost every aspect of Korean society.

Nevertheless, it is still important to recognize the role of tradition in South Korean society; when considered alongside the presence of the modern society, it has contributed to the integrated features of Korean reality: modern and traditional sectors functioning alongside each other. Their contiguity is a fundamental characteristic of Korean society, even in highly urbanized and seemingly modern space. As urbanization and social mobility stripped away whatever 'psychic subsistence' the social networks once provided for their inhabitants, can we still see an ineradicable characteristic of Korea – a genuine 'Korean-ness'? If so, would it be impervious to the changing social, political and economic conditions? What appears to be certain here is that the historical experiences and socio-economic changes place new challenges on human sociality and modes of thought/action. As Lefebvre writes (1976: 91): 'Former relations may degenerate or dissolve... Others are constituted in such a way that there is production of social relations within the re-production of... new relations emerge from within those which are dissolving.'

Development as a long-term process of aggregated changes in the structure of demand, production and employment heralded the transformation from a traditional to a modern economic system. The South Korean economy was transformed with a developmental strategy aimed at raising productivity in the manufacturing sector, while developing other capital-intensive activities that could gradually move the country into the core of the capitalist world economy. As a result, South Korea has made great advances in overall production efficiency and leads in numerous high-tech market sectors, even though this has in many ways deepened its dependency and heightened its indebtedness. Similarly, in rural areas, agricultural production has become increasingly sophisticated, which led to improvements in rice production, increase in mechanization, and a rise in living conditions. This has been at the cost, however, of uneven development, degradation of the natural environment and eroding traditional forms of sociality.

The imbalances of social and economic development in Korean modernization are most visible in the area of state welfare or, as is the case for most Koreans, the lack of state welfare. The welfare provisions of South Korea, like many other East Asian NICs, has for long been weak, small and limited in comparison with both Western countries and other states with similar levels of economic development, such as those in Latin America (Deyo 1989b). This difference can be ascribed to the different emphasis placed on international competitiveness, differing degrees of incorporation in the world economic system, and the endogenous features of a given country such as political institutions, economic conditions, social structures and cultural traditions: a relatively low level of economic modernization, higher defense budget, and patriarchal family structures.

South Korea's welfare policy was effected economically by a state–corporate alliance, politically by the bureaucratic authoritarian regime, and socio-culturally by Confucian traditions. The historical interplay of these factors caused welfare programs to be initiated passively and developed asymmetrically. They were

mainly reactionary to demands for redistribution – unsatisfactory in terms of equality and, in some ways, efficiency. As Deyo (1992: 49–63) notes, South Korea's welfare-oriented social policy remained at a relatively low level, in relation to the level of its economic development. Its social policy tended to be constructed according to the imperatives of capitalist economic rationality, rather than to social needs and the well-being of the population.

As mentioned above, a country's development is closely related to state–society relations. A high level of state power depends on its ability to generate consensus to mobilize the masses. Without the consensus of a majority of the population, the goals of the state are much harder to attain. South Korean economic development strategies have depended upon the willingness of most of its population to sacrifice present pleasures for the hopes of later prosperity and Korean reunification. This has generated a future-oriented national identity.⁹ However, the rapid pace of Korean industrial development raised the issue of the distribution of wealth, and called to question social identity. A reinvention of national narrative is needed for articulation of concepts in support of social relations preferred by the developmentalist state (e.g. civic duty), and of Korean national consciousness (e.g. citizenship and identity). Continued economic development and political reforms have led to an increase in the population's aspirations for economic redistribution and political participation. Under these circumstances, the state is no longer able to rely on its absolute authority to control and marginalize social demands. To maintain continued economic growth and retain political support, the state needs to have closer interaction with society and take social needs into account.

Income redistribution and good management of the national economy are important conditions for sustainable development (Bello and Cunningham 1994: 445–58). With continuing industrialization and urbanization, people can no longer depend on the traditional extended family system for social security. The government has to spend more on public welfare and expand infrastructural facilities to support increasing demands for social services. The external pressures from globalization and interventions from international agencies have also left their impact on the national agenda of welfare reforms. Yet reform measures have tended to focus solely on the administrative aspects of social welfare programs. A re-examination of the state's obligations for the well-being of its people is necessary.

(2) Political dimensions of modernization

The balance of forces in civil society is shifting as a new historical conjuncture emerges. In South Korea, the previous regimes (Rhee, Park, Chun) violated civil and political liberties. They relied on coercive forces, the army and police, and restrictive laws to suppress opposition and retain power. Those regimes had in common an authoritarian leadership that impaired the process of democratization. Despite the fact that the South Korean state exercised its authoritarian policies and plans, groups within civil society mobilized in pursuit of greater democracy, restoration of economic and political rights, and regional and local autonomy. South Korean democratization has consistently been initiated and facilitated by

civil society groups. The recent dramatic political transformation clearly reflects a transformation of the political and economic relationship between the state and civil groups, and the changing conditions in the broader international system.

Against this background, the relationship between civil and political liberty and economic growth has become the subject of much discussion (Cheng and Krause 1991: 3–25; Thompson 1996: 625–47). The complex nature of the relationship between economic modernization and political reform in East Asia is nowhere better illustrated than in South Korea, where economic success was achieved by the authoritarian developmentalist state. The price of economic advancement has often involved the ruthless repression of opposing views. The Korean military regimes, concerned themselves with political order and economic growth, increasingly become the focus of political opposition. The rationale for maintaining a tight grip on the citizenry has been the interests of ‘national security’ and the theme of anti-communism was promoted as a secular ‘religion’ that justified authoritarian regimes.

Yet, the South Korean state’s repressive politico-economic actions have resulted in an irrevocable socio-political crisis. Severe state repression led to the rise of radical social movements, seeking to change political conditions by means of protest and direct militant actions. Rapid economic development created contradictory forces that pushed, and are still pushing, South Korea further towards democracy. Increasing economic development, growing social mobilization, and the spread of democratic values made dictatorship more fragile and paved the way for democratic transition (Bedeski 1994: 94–119). While the conditions for democracy improved in a wide range of economic, social, cultural and institutional settings, the opposition has become more radicalized, and social movement has shifted away from an emphasis on political rights and constitutionalism towards concerns for human rights and issues of wider social justice. In this context, the presidential election in 1987 was a key turning point in South Korean politics.

The South Korean democracy movement in the late 1980s was strong insofar as there was a coalition between the middle and working classes. This coalition was rooted in the socio-economic demands, as well as political mobilization against the military regime. While the movement successfully raised the level of popular organization and consciousness, the middle and working classes started to lose the sense of ‘community interest’ that had originally brought them together. The sense of a cohesive civic unity broke down as the middle classes switched from being active participants to passive spectators or even hostile opposition to the more radical trade union activities after the democratization movement in 1987. The democratic transition facilitated the empowerment of social movements and civil society, but the subsequent embracing of more moderate political strategies that appeal to the middle classes has somewhat curtailed the spread of more radical movements. The structural basis of ‘people’s power’ has thereby narrowed and the state’s power has been maintained.¹⁰

As the governmental policymaking did not involve a broad majority of people in a credible sense, government policies are thus often influenced by a combination

of shortsighted pragmatism and the ideology of leadership. There are, of course, long-term stable macroeconomic policies, but they are based on a symbiotic relationship between the state and large conglomerates.¹¹ The fact that social development policy was strongly rooted in politics further consolidated the social basis of state power, and that in turn made it more difficult to promote and uphold democratic values. In addition, Korea's new democracy is laden with obstacles such as weak constitutionalism and external security vulnerability. Under such circumstances, genuine political reforms have been slow in coming.

Transition from authoritarianism also coincided with the fundamental change in the relations between state and society. A new civil society is emerging, leading to reorganization of society in accordance with new principles. The magnitude of its challenges has grown to the degree that civil society opens up more opportunities for people to participate in national policy debate and policymaking.¹² With the deepening of democratization, legitimation of political power by means of elections and political parties would give rise to a new credibility for the state only if the citizenry is able to exercise popular sovereignty through political participation. From the state's point of view, it becomes expedient to maximize the adaptability of the system via political reform rather than to push away the opposition movements.

For democracy to flourish it has to be reconceived as a double-sided phenomenon: reform of the state power and restructuring of civil society.¹³ Stable democracy depends on a pluralistic and engaging civil society, organized through private and voluntary arrangements between individuals and groups outside the direct control of the state. It also requires that there be no serious threat to the authority and power of the state. This new political culture presupposes, in turn, a re-evaluation of civil society *vis-à-vis* the state.

On the other hand, the dynamic transformation from militaristic authoritarianism to democracy has not brought about a fundamental change of political culture.¹⁴ As Sung Chul Yang correctly points out, in spite of the political reforms, a significant gap exists between institutional democratic reforms and undemocratic 'habits of the heart' (1995: 10). Deep-seated corruption, personalism and the ferocious fight for *daekwon* (ultimate or highest power) continue to compromise the political process and remain impediments to full democratization.

(3) Cultural dimensions of modernization

Industrialization in South Korea came from the top, preserving and strengthening traditional hierarchies and cultural forms in a highly selective way. Despite rapid changes in social and economic structures in post-war Korea, traditional values and Confucian conceptions of authority remained ubiquitous. Traditional habits and cultural values continued to play a role in a changing environment and have important ideological implications for the emergent political and economic institutions. The state, in this context, was and is involved in the control of cultural and moral resources through both overt and tacit ideological manipulation. In turn, capitalist development and intensive industrialization contributed to the

continual relevance of neo-familism, patrimonialism and regionalism.¹⁵ This partly explains why the development of class-consciousness was delayed in South Korean society. Individuals struggled for their new social status, utilizing various personal connections rather than collective actions. Furthermore, the South Korean state's militaristic nationalism served to manipulate a social and cultural milieu suitable for industrial growth, and to support a range of policies required for the promotion of growth.

At the same time, Korean people are not always 'tradition-bound' or bounded by the Confucian ethic. They have selectively interpreted cultural rules and strategically applied them to their good. Tradition cannot survive the vicissitudes of time if it fails to adapt to the present conditions. The resilience of a society in the modernization process depends on how it incorporates external and internal changes into certain core elements of its culture. In this process, tradition evolves in its interaction with foreign values and structures, and is reinvented through its reinterpretations. Key to a tradition with contemporary relevance is that it can survive the infusion of new values and remain open to new visions of social development.

With regard to the importance of cultural factors in the creation and reformation of social and political practices, there is an unusual artificiality in Confucian traditions in Korea. This is partly because of its limited exposure to modernity, and partly because of the tradition-recasting strategies utilized by the authoritarian state. Confucianism plays a significant role in both legitimizing the hegemonic moral and political order and integrating the process of modernity. Korean politics is characterized by personalism in both government and opposition parties, and by the lack of an independent and effective legislative tradition. South Korea's main political problem has been an excessive concentration of power. Quee-Young Kim (1988) talks about the influence of the Korean Confucianism on contemporary culture and modernization in Korea. He selects three major cultural forms from the social order of the Choson Dynasty: personalism, centralism and orthodoxy. Using these three conceptual tools, he argues that Confucianism was replaced by democracy as a political doctrine, but its cultural essence was still left intact.

The central source of political power resides in the President and his staff, including a circle of informal advisors. This characteristic of the political culture provides for tight hierarchical control. The efficiency of the ruling regime in pursuing its objectives has been comparatively untrammelled by the constraints of conservative forces and economic pressure groups. It tends to function in an elitist, meritocratic and authoritarian style of leadership, a phenomenon that is a part of 'Neo-Confucianist' adaptation of the cultural tradition.

While Confucian traditions in South Korean society provided social and moral foundation for the authoritarian rule, the opposition movements challenged the authoritarian rule while drawing upon traditional cultural practices.¹⁶ What is interesting is that culture takes on the role of 'switchmen' (Weber) in the historical making and remaking of institutions during the democratization process. A regime change occurs when value orientations at the individual level shift and help form a collective consciousness through secular forms of ritual, e.g. memorial

ceremonies, night prayers, hunger strikes and street protests (Park, S. 1998). Demonstration is ritualized through songs, slogans and dance. They help to bring people together and motivate them to be involved in democratic struggles. Democratic values and beliefs create and strengthen the solidarity of democratic forces, which give direction to political change and engender a legitimacy crisis. 'Culture' here serves as the basis for appropriating new ideas and values. Contemporary social movements in South Korea, particularly student and workers movements, carry out political activities using traditional communitarian cultural mores alongside democratic ones such as freedom, equality and participation.

Culture changes through mutation, responding to both environmental and social challenges. Values and norms embedded in a society change under the impact of social and economic change. Throughout the recent history of South Korea, cultural values have been used and modified in many ways, to suit a range of diverse purposes. Given the flexible way in which cultural values can be interpreted and reinterpreted, what is of theoretical interest here is the reflexivity of a society and its agencies and how this guides their cultural choices and decisions. My premise is that the greater the level of reflexivity, the more dynamic its decision-making processes and cultural selectivity will be. Here it is important to understand how rich cultural resources have been used for economic development, nation building and cultural identity in the modernization process.

6 Korea's rise and integration into the world system

The rise of East Asia, and in particular South Korea, in the world market is not just a consequence of, but also a response to – and a formative factor in – globalization. I have shown this in Chapter 3 in discussing modernization as a specific project of the developmentalist state. In this chapter, I will argue that it is a mistake to reduce global relations to a singular underlying logic of a capitalist world system, defined largely in economic terms. Capitalism does not exist as a universal, exclusive system. It is neither an abstract entity nor simply an economic system. It is a historically inflective and changing system, where political, economic and cultural arrangements interact. It involves concepts, symbols, models and customs, derived from historically specific contexts that function as transformative social forces.

There is no one paradigm that can explain different experiences and development patterns. Rather, there are various perspectives, all incomplete and problematic. To understand this in the case of South Korea, it is useful to examine the regional geopolitical background, the factors that give a specific direction to Korea's integration with the world economy, as well as the global geopolitical setup. To avoid economic reductionism of any kind, I will emphasize the historically contingent factors and particular geopolitical factors that provided South Korea with exceedingly suitable conditions for the emergence of its developmentalist state.

1. South Korea's integration into the world system: in search of a niche

(1) Beyond modernization and dependency theories

While modernization theory emphasizes internal causation and assumes the universal validity of the Western model, dependency theory attempts to explain the gulf between the optimistic expectations of modernization theory and the reality of continued economic disparity between the West and the rest. Developmentalist policies have been artificially generalized and showcased by economic theorists to demonstrate capitalism's ideological and economic superiority. In contrast, dependency theory emphasizes the role of the global economic structures in sustaining underdevelopment and maintaining unequal power relations between countries. Modernization theory bases itself on an evolutionary and structural functional analysis with a deep-featuring Euro-centric thinking and reasoning. Dependency theory, on the other hand, focuses on external factors and how they

constrain and shape (under)development within poor countries, with a deep faith in historical determinism. As such, it leans towards economic reductionism and is unable or not wanting to develop comparative analysis of local institutions and processes.

Both modernization theory and dependency theory are modernist paradigms based on the centrality of the nation-state. Dependency theory suggests that the underdeveloped countries should be cut off from the world capitalist system, and that self-reliant economies should be established for development to occur. Modernization theory proposes that capitalism is the ultimate insurance of national development. The question that concerns us here is what heuristic value, if any, do these two competing paradigms have for describing and explaining modern development in Korea?

The experience of the two Koreas reveals the reverse of what dependency theory would lead us to expect: 'dependent' capitalist South Korea has outperformed 'self-reliant' communist North Korea in many areas (Kim, B. 1992). And yet, contrary to modernization theory, South Korea has been and still is unquestionably dependent upon the United States and Japan, and is still troubled by many of the characteristics that we would commonly associate with the developing countries. The question of industrialization in South Korea then poses a serious problem for modernization theory and dependency theory. In fact, South Korea's economic success is a paradox to any development theory: it is an unusual case of dependent development. Contrary to the arguments of early dependency theory, the South Korean state was able to formulate relatively autonomous policies, promoting dependent development (see Lim 1985). The two Korean cases suggest that the solution to underdevelopment may not be a simple withdrawal from the world capitalist system, nor the oppressive mobilization of centralized economic and socio-political forces.

The problems invoked here have been usefully discussed by Boris Kagarlitsky (1995). He provides a comparative analysis of institutions and processes of development within the framework of dependency theory, in an effort to overcome economic reductionism and an excessive stress on external factors. He re-evaluates South Korea's economic success story in his exploration of the contradictions of development and modernization. Kagarlitsky acknowledges the remarkable economic growth in South Korea and compares it with the Stalinist model.¹ According to him, there are two distinct differences between these two models. The first difference is the degree of integration into the world market. The Stalinist model keeps the maximum distance from the world market. By contrast, the South Korean economy pursued an export-oriented policy that was totally dependent on the world market. The second difference is the degree of financial and technological independence. The Stalinist model maintains the maximum possible degree of technological and financial independence from the world economy, while in South Korea economic growth is based on heavy borrowing of money and technology from the advanced industrialized countries.

Kagarlitsky makes the point that the modern and traditional sectors compensate each other by producing different dynamics in the multistructured society

(1995: 37). As he correctly points out, South Korea's economic success has given rise to other internal problems because of the very nature of the economic policy and the way it was implemented. What Kagarlitsky fails to notice, however, is a different state-society relationship in South Korea from that in the Soviet Union. Because of the traumatic historical experience of colonization, war and division of nation, most Koreans are willing to pursue the modernization project even at a very high cost.² With rapid economic growth and subsequent changes in the state-society relationship, the objectives of civil society have been broadened to the social and political spheres. The democratic transition in 1987 shows that Korean society was facing urgent needs for reform not only in the economic but also in the political and socio-cultural areas. Democratization became an indispensable part of modernization rather than a counterweight to development.

If world capitalism allows the Third World countries only partial modernization for the normal functioning of the world capitalist system, the only way for the Third World countries to develop is to accept their dependency as a new logic of development. Here, Kagarlitsky sees that dependency becomes an internal problem as well as an external condition, leading to more failures in modernization. Kagarlitsky's affirmation of the validity of dependency theory does supply insights into the limits of the world capitalist system, but he at the same time underplays positive externalities provided for the Third World countries. We need to redefine the dependency issue in a new global economic context.

In contrast to Kagarlitsky and other dependency theorists, neoclassical explanations attribute economic growth in the newly industrialized countries (NICs) to a stable macroeconomic environment while statist explanations see the reliance on persistent state interventions. The South Korean economic success owes much to the autonomy and developmental orientation of the state that directed the economy to export-led industries and shielded it from the impact of the fluctuations of the global economic forces. The government aimed at improving corporate productivity and the ability of corporate entities to learn fast and accelerate growth, rather than leave them to survive on their own. Foreign capital has not found it easy to penetrate South Korea. South Korea contributed to the world system not by attracting capital from the core countries, but by exporting labor-intensive and (later) capital-intensive products to the world market. The strong state provided favorable incentives crucial for boosting exports in niche markets.

Many studies, while trying to explain the rapid development of the region with reference to modernization theory, dismiss the regional and global environment for East Asian development. The discussion usually runs in terms of protectionism versus free market neo-liberalism, with the role of the state in the economic success in the region being fiercely contested. The focus is customarily on the post-war period of development, with little consideration of the historical and cultural background. Since the second half of the 1980s, the statist argument about the efficacy of state intervention in economic activities has convinced people of a coordinated system of planning between industry, the banking system and the state bureaucracy. That theory seemed to match the economic and political rationality in the region.³

There is a growing realization that the grand paradigms of modernization and dependency need to be modified in light of unique historical and sociological circumstances, such as those found in the Korean experience. An alternative, perhaps dialectic, approach can be useful with a consideration of the international political and economic factors, domestic socio-cultural variables, and historical legacies at the same time. In this way, we can take into account the underlying social structures that affect economic behavior and the various forms of state power that influenced the directions and outcomes of economic activity.

(2) Geopolitical factors in South Korea's development

In this section, I will discuss 'selective integration' into the world economy of East Asia in general and South Korea in particular. Geopolitical variants and historical conditions provide sources of different patterns of economic development. I deal with the process of South Korean economic integration into the world system from a geopolitical perspective.⁴ As we have observed, geopolitics is often intertwined with emerging cultural constructs (Asian values) and changing regional dynamics (ending of the Cold War). In order to give a clearer picture of the East Asian developmental model, we need to take into account a unique regional political economy manifested in the East Asian mode of development and the evolving global context.

The regional dynamics of contemporary East Asia need to be understood in terms of its geopolitical development before the Second World War. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Korea was of critical geopolitical concern to its neighboring countries: China, Japan and Russia were all, to a greater or lesser extent, interested parties in Korea at that time. In East Asia, the geopolitical order before the mid-nineteenth century was, for all intents and purposes, a Chinese world order. Yet this order was not static or monolithic, or one that China had unilaterally imposed upon its fellow East Asian countries. For Korea, the fact that the arrangement was hierarchical, with itself as a tributary state, was mitigated psychologically by the familial language of younger-brother/elder-brother ties in which Korea had enjoyed virtual autonomy.

This generally benign system was broken by the mid- and late nineteenth century 'treaty system' because of the aggressive expansion of the West in the region. The increasing incorporation of the region into the world system made the opening up of Korea inevitable. This opening up in turn contributed to changes in political, economic and social relationships and structures in Korea (Kim, K.-H. 1980). At the turn of the century the newly modernized Japan emerged as a regional power, colonizing Korea, Taiwan and Manchuria. With 'administrative guidance' by the colonial government, tight integration of the region proceeded to consolidate the Japanese empire and to meet its wartime requirements (Aseniero 1994). Because of its specific geopolitical features, Japanese imperialism over Korea overall brought about modernization of agriculture and industrialization in Korea. The colonial power began to restructure the social and economic infrastructure. This new arrangement produced a pattern of international exploitation and conflict in the region (Hart-Landsberg 1989: 57).

After the Second World War, the United States emerged as the new hegemonic power in world economy and politics. While Japan's defeat resulted in the breakdown of an integrated regional economy, the region was (re)integrated into the new global power game of the Cold War. The main concern of the United States with East Asia was the containment of communism. After liberation, Korea found itself in the middle of the conflict between two armies of occupation, with no formal agreement regarding the specifics of Korea's future. The US involvement in Korea was affected by Korea's colonial social structure – powerful bureaucratic rule, weakened landlords, an atomized yet economically integrated bourgeoisie, and independent peasant and labor movements (Lee 1984: 373–9).

The Korean War (1950–3) brought about a new configuration of forces in the region. China's decision to enter the Korean War exerted an unexpected impact on the relations between the US and Japan. During the Korean War, US–Japan relations changed dramatically from that of wartime enemy to one of a security partnership in Asia. The Korean War also brought a fundamental change to Japanese economic and diplomatic relations in Asia. The Korean War was an economic opportunity for Japan, while it was a military opportunity for the United States.⁵

After three years of war, South Korea was 'chosen,' for geostrategic reasons, as a bulwark against communism. As the United States' anti-communist policy affected Japan's post-war development, Cold War geopolitics benefited South Korea. Under US patronage, South Korea received enormous grants and aids to reconstruct its economic infrastructure. The Korean War and the following division of the nation also gave rise to the military regime. The military regime succeeded in exploiting circumstances under the Cold War to achieve national economic development.⁶ Here, geopolitical conditions created a unique environment necessary for economic take-off and re-established the relationship between the US and South Korea as one of patron–client for mutual benefits.⁷ South Korea was integrated into the American-led world capitalism.

It was not until the mid-1960s that South Korea's development strategy redirected from import-substitution to export-led industrialization. The United States also opened its own markets to South Korea, which made it easy to move to the newly adopted economic strategy. Under the US military and economic hegemony, South Korea was guaranteed military security and the largest single marketplace for export during the period of rapid economic growth.

In the 1970s, there was a significant restructuring of the division of labor in the world system. In addition to the geopolitical factors that gave Korea easy access to the US market, the special international economic order after the Second World War, especially the (Keynesian) Bretton Woods system of international financial governance, facilitated South Korea's economic catch-up. There were also further international economic advantages from close economic relations with rapidly rising Japan. The new international division of labor constituted a global division in the manufacture of products for world markets. As Japan achieved upward mobility in the world economy towards high-technology production, South Korea, along with other East Asian NICs, took over Japan's labor-intensive industries.

The NICs followed Japan's spectacular model in the 1960s and the early 1970s to achieve their own economic success.

Petri argues that South Korea's exports today are highly correlated with Japan's exports fifteen years ago (1988: 47–63). South Korea found its export niche in the world market by taking over the existing market from Japan, while Japan moved on to technologically advanced capital-intensive industries. South Korea has consciously followed the Japanese model, in which were the discipline of international markets and an export orientation. In addition, South Korea has a similar economic infrastructure due to its occupation by Japan. This also helped Korea's learning from Japan and explains the similarities in developmental patterns between the two countries, especially in governmental policies and industrial organization. To achieve a high level of growth through the new international division of labor after the Second World War, South Korea needed industrial conditions that would ensure low production costs and high profits. Keeping wages low has been essential. Extraction of an agricultural labor surplus was used to accomplish this.⁸

By the end of the 1970s, the Bretton Woods system and the Keynesian presuppositions gave way to neo-liberalism. The latter advocated deregulation of the international financial system. During this period, the world economy contracted and the United States appeared to be a declining hegemony.⁹ In contrast, Japan and the NICs attained economic success in a relatively short time and East Asia emerged as a new epicenter of capital accumulation in the world economy.¹⁰ Japan became an important catalyst in the region through trade, technology transfer and investment.

The presence of Japan and China as regional rivals was a key factor enabling the two Koreas to bargain with their senior partners. The replacement of the East–West confrontation at the end of the 1980s accelerated South Korea's rapprochement with Russia and China, both eager for investment and technological transfer. After the Cold War, however, the new world order has posed challenges to the South Korean economy (Chung 1992). That is, the political and economic advantages from the superpower patron–client relations with its senior partners have been withdrawn or diluted.¹¹

As for South Korea, a combination of structural change, and external and internal pressures, have profoundly altered the post-war trajectory of Korea's modernization. Structural constraints have been imposed by the international system. As the trade deficit with Japan deepened, the United States imposed protectionist measures against Japanese imports and sought to open up the Japanese market to US importers. The same things happened to South Korea with even harsher pressure in the early 1980s. South Korea no longer enjoyed the same privilege of entry to the US markets as it rose from being a US client state to an industrialized middle power and trade partner of the United States. The significance of the Cold War alliance against global communism faded away as communist regimes began to lose their economic and then political power in the world system. The United States implemented an aggressive economic policy towards South Korea to eliminate the trade deficit. Being a principal target of US trade pressure, South Korea was subjected to tough demands under anti-dumping measures and Super 301.

Thus, South Korea's economic relations with the United States suffered from growing friction.¹²

In addition, democratization and the changing profile of South Korean society have altered the institutional environment for economic decision-making. Apart from democratization and American demands for market access, the traditional gatekeeping role of the government (the ability of the state to act as a gatekeeper between society and the world economy) has been changed under increasingly strong forces of globalization.

So far, the pressures for economic liberalization and deregulation have been softened with political and economic realities in East Asian countries: concern with economic as well as political sovereignty; the legacy of the *dirigiste* state; deep political control; the impressive performance of authoritarian industrialization. This may also have to do with the East Asian development model itself. For almost a decade, economists have been debating the notion that business and government leaders in East Asia had developed a new brand of capitalism that is more potent than the free-market system (Johnson 1987).¹³ Many experts see a uniquely Asian economic model that combines the dynamism of the market with the advantages of centralized government planning (Wade 1990). The World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, eager for some vindication of their market-driven, free-trade doctrine, have been pushing this 'NICs' model' as an answer to the perennial problem of development in the underdeveloped countries. With the recent democratic transformation in the region, some see state capitalist industrialization as a stage in the march to full acceptance as a democratic capitalist nation (see Haggard 1990).¹⁴

What would be then some of the structural causes that began slowing economic growth in the NICs? The NICs have been losing their 'comparative advantage' of cheap labor. In their strategy to ward off stagnation, government planners emphasized diversification of export markets and increasing reliance on their long-neglected domestic markets (see Bello 1989: 144–6). In cultivating a domestic market, workers' incomes had to increase in order to create more purchasing power to buy local goods. Rising real wages made the NICs' labor-intensive industries noncompetitive, encouraging them to search for cheap labor elsewhere or to import cheap labor. The technocrats had to find a way to resolve a very serious conflict of interest between plans to enlarge the domestic market and efforts to move to high-technology industries. Making this transition from labor-intensive to capital- and skill-intensive industries involved restructuring the economic system, thus creating unemployment and stagnant domestic markets. Since the 1980s, the East Asian strategy has aimed at accommodating multinational firms in national macroeconomic restructuring, and at orienting informatics development toward the global market.

There has also been a growing tendency toward economic regionalism as an alternative to the post-war movement toward economic multilateralism and liberalization. The movements toward regionalism differ greatly from one region to another. The frantic pace of economic growth of recent years shows that the largest developments in the region included increase in intra-regional trade.

External imperatives ensure that regionalism in East Asia is a defensive response to regionalism elsewhere, while internal dynamics – proximity and complementary structures of the economies and a similar cultural heritage – provide the necessary preconditions for regionalism.

Political suspicions, ideological barriers, historical legacies and high dependence on trade outside the region, however, have meant that regionalization in East Asia is less institutionalized and less discriminatory against economies outside the region. Its member states have developed in a regional environment characterized by bilateral ties with the US rather than multilateral ones. Now the diplomatic activity of the four major countries in the Asia Pacific region – the United States, China, Japan and Russia – show signs of building a multipolar system (Ching 1997: 40). The multiplicity of multilateral and bilateral meetings reflects the emergence of a multipolar world. These bilateral relationships are strategic partnerships rather than alliances, except for the US and Japan. What is at stake for all of the countries is the maintenance of peace and national economic development.

Cummings (1997) argues that Japan plays a semi-peripheral role in Asia, not a hegemonic one. In Cummings' view, Japan's leading role in the region is constrained by US military, cultural and technological hegemony. While this seems plausible, it is not clear how strong US influence in the region will continue to be. Nor is it clear whether we can assess Japan's economic dominance *vis-à-vis* America's military dominance. Despite all its economic and military strength, the United States has never been able to exercise managerial control of the global financial system to the same extent as previous hegemonic powers (see Arrighi 1994: 325–56; 1998). With the breakdown of the Bretton Woods agreement, the world's monetary and financial systems became transnational and were arguably dominated by Japanese capital. It is therefore important to note that the current movement towards regionalism is taking place simultaneously with the globalization of the world economy. These two trends constitute a dialectical process, reflecting the need of national economies to participate in the world economy, to act appropriately to safeguard and continually strengthen their competitiveness in world markets. Hence, a more useful approach would be to synthesize the linkages between the global system, the region and the autonomy of the state in question.

2. State autonomy and economic modernization

There are significant differences in the types of industrial development in East Asia and other parts of the world. East Asia relied on a combination of subtle and complex political and economic conditions in the post-war period. External circumstances as well as geopolitical conditions were favorable to East Asian countries. They began export-oriented industrialization at the height of the liberal post-war international economic order, when import barriers to US markets were minimal.¹⁵ Evans compares the different patterns of development in East Asia with Latin America (1987: 203–47) and points out the unique transformation of dependency structures when the dominant power in East Asia shifted from

Imperial Japan to the United States. In this process, Korea's integration into the world capitalist system could be seen as a positive move. The traditional landlord class was dispossessed through land reforms and the state acquired a well-organized bureaucratic system from the colonial experience before multinational corporations could penetrate. These factors promoted primitive accumulation with relative ease. The East Asian cases show ways in which dependent peripheral states have developed their dynamic comparative advantage as a response to the opportunities and constraints faced both domestically and with to the world economic system.

Another interrelated process is the formation of particular types of states out of specific post-colonial society configurations. State policies interacted with the dynamics of the global arena. In the case of South Korea, state formation was very closely linked to integration in the world system, perhaps more so than in China and Japan. Capitalist development and the position of the nation-state in the world system shaped the particular political regimes as social groups, classes and the state compete for control over social, economic and political resources. In South Korea, the particular mode of capitalist accumulation not only promoted industrialization, but also led to the emergence of an authoritarian developmentalist state. South Korean society was shaped and reshaped by the political reforms and a corporatist strategy adopted by the state. This, in turn, transformed South Korea's social structure and state-society relations. State strength associated with the specific national/historical legacies seemed to play a critical role in this respect. However, a strong state does not always lead an economy to growth. A comparative approach will help us identify some of the decisive factors in successful development.

Onis argues that the factors contributing to the successful development of East Asian countries were the active role of state, strategic industrial policy and appropriate institutions facilitating the formulation and implementation of policy (1995: 97–119). He compares three successful models of development (the East Asian model, the European corporatist model, and the Italian model based on small firms and flexible specialization), and emphasizes their common denominators: a mix of competition and cooperation with certain institutional arrangements. Active state intervention in these models was designed to facilitate the process of collaboration and competition. It is what he calls 'contests' that combined competition with the benefits of cooperation among firms and between the government and the private sector. The key feature of each contest is that the government distributes rewards – access to credit or foreign exchange – based on performance, which the government and competing firms monitor. In South Korea, as state development strategies were redirected from labor-intensive export manufacturing to higher value-added manufacturing and services, development policy also included a social policy to enhance the skills and productivity of labor (see Deyo 1992: 49–51).

At this point, it seems useful to discuss the new institutional approach and its reference to cultural factors as it proposes to explain economic development within the historical and socio-cultural context. Kang (1995), through his comparative study of the South Korean and Taiwanese cases, suggests three main factors

useful for theorizing East Asian development: the politics of choice, the role of history and the international system.¹⁶ First, in regard to the politics of choice, Kang argues that we need to examine the relationship between big business and the state. Depending on the 'institutional environment,' such as laws, politics and customs, the size of business in countries is different, while economic policy and politics behind policy choices tend to be decided by a patron-client relationship between ruler and bureaucrats. As Kang observes, policy advice is not given in vacuum. Institutional and political circumstances are important.

Second, Kang emphasizes the historical legacies of Japanese colonialism that provided the infrastructure for economic development in South Korea and Taiwan. According to him, there is more than one main factor in explaining the historical legacy. These include not only such external factors as US military and economic foreign aid, but also traditional historical factors such as hierarchical and authoritarian personal relations and the reverence for civil service. Third, Kang pays attention to the domestic-international linkage, in which the security concerns in South Korea and Taiwan helped the states to deepen their penetration into the international system and mobilize the citizenry with a great degree of autonomy.

This comparison of South Korea and Taiwan can be extended to emphasize not only the similarities but also the differences among countries in the region. Such differences include state-society relations, industrial policies, and historical and cultural traditions. To begin with, South Korea and Taiwan belonged to the Chinese civilizational complex and experienced Japanese colonial rule at a similar period in time. These factors provided a similar institutional foundation for their late modernization. South Korea and Taiwan inherited some crucial structural factors such as the synergetic combination of state, credit institutions and Japanese business organization. After liberation, both countries were (re)integrated into the US hegemonic sphere. Due to their geostrategic importance, South Korea and Taiwan enjoyed considerable military and economic support from the United States. Both were developmental states with the capacity to develop their own economic strategies and have served as allies of the West in the face of communist regimes in China and North Korea after the Second World War. In both cases, though in different proportions, the political culture was a mixture of statist nationalism, Confucianism and liberalism, within the framework of an enforced anti-communist consensus.

Both South Korea and Taiwan compensated for the imbalance and insufficiency of their resources through economic planning and development strategy, and helped to create a comparative advantage for their economic growth. A broader authoritarianism in the social structure took deliberate and instrumental forms. A high degree of social control contributed to the rise of a growth-friendly labor force. Both countries have achieved high rates of economic growth and full employment, promoting labor-intensive exports for foreign exchange.

However, each was guided by a different model of development. South Korea focused more unilaterally on growth than Taiwan. Also, while state economic planning agencies influenced the direction of investment, industrialization and foreign trade in both, each had different policies. The South Korean government

used labor legislation, while Taiwan implemented a labor-market approach. While both countries restricted union participation in the policymaking process, South Korean workers seem to have capitalized more successfully on the political opportunities because of the economic structure, regime type and developmental sequences (see Deyo 1989a: 152–61).

Using the concept of state-informed embeddedness, Fields (1995) explains the reasons for differences in the formation and development of a wide variety of economic organizations in South Korea and Taiwan. He examines the nature of state–business relations and their connection with national economic performance. Fields contrasts the huge, market-dominating and highly diversified private business groups in South Korea with the smaller, less concentrated and less powerful business groups in Taiwan. He also explores the key similarities and differences between the two countries in the development of formal and informal financial institutions and markets. Fields argues that the differences have something to do with regime ideology, historical experience and institutional attributes.

The Taiwanese state, a one party-state drawing on the ideological sources of Leninism, was more effective in the political control of society than the South Korean regimes, but was and is weaker in guiding the economy than the South Korean state. In South Korea, the economic role of the state is more significant than its role in Taiwan, in terms of strength and level of intervention. Despite an absolute monopoly of political power, weak state guidance for small export-sector industries contributed to rapid capital accumulation in Taiwan; while South Korea's positive economic development is primarily attributable to a small number of large private firms and strong state guidance with an effective administrative capacity.

Both countries share core cultural elements of the region, especially in relation to economic success. Although the traditional values were derived from Confucianism and each society's historical experience (colonization and civil war) provides potential for economic growth, it is rather the interaction between cultural and institutional factors that better explains the two countries' experiences of modernization.¹⁷ The common Chinese heritage of the two countries is crucial in this respect.

Metzger (1989) brings Confucian tradition and values into his analysis of economic modernization in China. He identifies Confucian culture with the mainstream beliefs, policies, institutions and behaviors that existed in late imperial times and formed the historical basis of Chinese modernization.¹⁸ He uses three types of relationship between the civil society and the political center ('uninhibited,' 'inhibited' and 'subordinated' political center) to analyze the cultural and societal patterns. Metzger examines the Taiwanese case as a small-scale but significant case of economic modernization in China and contrasts it with the case of mainland China.¹⁹ But his focus is on the relationship between Confucian culture and the political center because, according to him, economic modernization in China required a political center strongly oriented towards instrumental rationality and economic growth. According to Metzger, economic modernization was advanced by the utilization and revision of traditional culture in Taiwan, but hindered by the way the Communists evoked their vision of moral transformation in China. In both cases, Confucian culture played a crucial role in forming the

traditional basis of modernization. Taiwan was able to form a political center with a firm commitment to instrumental rationality and economic growth, while creating room for an ascetic popular culture including familism and free entrepreneurship. In the case of late imperial and early Republican China, a political center with a strong commitment to instrumental rationality and economic development was missing. In communist China, the new principle of instrumental rationality linked to an unrevised Confucian tradition was not effective.²⁰

Metzger's comparison of China and Taiwan can be applied to the two Koreas. North and South Korea provide a similar case because they have the same Confucian cultural tradition. As Metzger notes, one of the most important conditions for the modernization of non-Western societies has been a strong political center that allows acceptance of Western values and encourages an instrumental rationality, and at the same time is able to control social conflicts the acceptance would cause. While both Koreas have achieved their economic development by the stable political centers inherited from the Confucian tradition,²¹ North Korea's political center proved less successful for sustained industrialization than the authoritarian political center in the South. North Korea also differed from the South in that it pursues economic growth via an official doctrine of self-reliance and inflexible closure to the international community. The two Koreas' development strategies produced very different efficacies, which cannot be explained by cultural variables alone. In this sense, it is worth noting that North Korea did enjoy a relatively successful modernization until the mid-1970s. For an explanation, we must look into the national and international contexts for structural change in social power relations and in the organizational forms of social reproduction.

North Korea's economic development was hampered by problems inherent in the socialist political system. The political center (the Korean Workers Party) constrained the everyday lives of the people, and distorted market rationality to such an extent that centralized political power subdued economic modernization. As for South Korea, it is the role of the state as the economic controller that has induced the accomplishments in modernization. The authoritarian South Korean government has successfully implemented modernization policies and provided a fully functional and efficient system of bureaucracy at the local level.

However, the underlying conditions that made political intervention in economic development effective have changed. The inherent contradiction between autonomous economic activity and centralized state control has gradually reduced the effectiveness of state intervention in the economy. Paradoxically, the remarkable success of state-controlled economic development has forced the state to re-evaluate its *raison d'être* and curtail its functions as regards controlling the economy.

Evans (1995) explores the capacity of countries to change their position in the international division of labor. He shows us how states' internal structures and connections to society affect industrialization. For instance, he argues that where countries ended up in the international division of labor depended on state capacity and the character of state involvement (1995: 11). Evans constructs two historically grounded ideal types: predatory and developmentalist states. Predatory states depend upon personal ties both for their cohesion and for their connections

with the wider society, so they tend to tolerate rent-seeking activities in national development. Developmentalist states, on the other hand, come close to approximating a Weberian bureaucracy with respect to their internal organization, but not to their social autonomy. Evans further argues that the developmentalist state is 'embedded in a concrete set of social ties that binds the state to society and provides institutionalized channels for the continued negotiation and renegotiation of goals and policies' (1995: 12). Thus, developmentalist states combine institutional autonomy with strong links to external social groups, with the result being that neither the state incumbents nor the private groups are able to serve their particular interest. He labels these varying roles and structures of developmentalist states as custodian, demiurge, midwifery and husbandry (1995: 77–81).

Through an examination of the role of the state in Brazil, India and South Korea, Evans suggests that embedded autonomy, together with a cohesive and autonomous bureaucracy, is a good formula for development. Such a formula allows the state to be close enough to economic agents to obtain information, but far enough away to avoid rent-seeking behavior from informants. This strong, guiding, non-rent-seeking bureaucracy can translate entrepreneurial profit-seeking activity into productivity, enhancing long-term projects rather than short-term growth strategies. Using the case study of the information technology (IT) sector, Evans illustrates how successful bureaucratic development in South Korea could produce industrial transformation.²²

In South Korea, long-standing tradition of embedded autonomy already existed before the industrial transformation. There was a coherent and cohesive state apparatus able to create policies and agencies that played a 'midwifery' role in the emergence of local informatics companies. The embeddedness of the developmentalist state was strong under the military regimes whose mobilizing capacities for economic growth were *par excellence*. After a successful upgrading from the periphery to semi-periphery in the world system, however, the effectiveness of the embedded autonomy of the developmentalist state started to erode. The very success of the transformation of IT production changed economic structures in South Korea. Entrepreneurial groups became strong enough to compete internationally without government support. Embedded autonomy became obsolete. Far from signaling obsolescence, however, the importance of such a husbandry role for the state is increasing in the ever-competitive world system. What is at stake is that embedded autonomy is changing in its character as the relations of state and society change (1995: 234).

Evans contributes to our understanding of the pluralist nature of economic modernization with the concepts of dependent development and embedded autonomy. The South Korean case is a typical example of Evans' dependent development model. The 'dependent-associated' development brought about rapid economic growth, differentiation of the productive system and advancement of the industrial structure. But it also resulted in social dislocation as well as political and economic exclusion. Evans' attempts to stress the positive aspects of the developmentalist state lead to a 'minimizing' of the other aspects – namely, the exploitative and repressive features that have contributed to social injustice and distortion

in economic structures.²³ The relationship between the government and large private enterprises is not 'horizontally embedded networks,' but rather a quasi-internal organization with a hierarchical relationship. Evans sees developmentalist and well-organized state interventions contributing to local capital formation and innovation. However, he is unable to explain why the notion of social embeddedness is stronger in South Korea than in India and Brazil, for his focus is limited to the dynamics between the government and the private sector. What Evans misses here is not only the geopolitical conditions, but also the special political and social configurations of class relations in Korean society.²⁴

To understand the Korean model of economic development, we need to reassess our analyses of the cultural and historical legacies, power (re)distribution, and class structures in relation to the state–society–economy linkages. The experience of Korea's economic modernization shows that the state is not just a regulative entity but also an effective actor; and it is able to achieve rapid economic development and redefine its role and position in the international economic system. The continuous and dynamic interactions of the state elites with social classes/sectors, as well as external agents, determine whether the state is capable of allocating resources, maintaining autonomy and being seen as legitimate.

7 The Korean economic crisis: the end of a miracle or a turning point?

In this chapter, I explore why Korea has been caught in what some have described as a 'global trap' (Martin and Schumann 1997). Since the 1997 financial crisis in East Asia, many were talking about the end of the miracle while others such as Krugman (1994) announced that the so-called miracle was a myth.¹ Both views, I will argue, are misleading. They both give us distorted images of development. To help us reflect on the tensions between different modes of capitalist development, I will focus on some key aspects of the economic crisis.

1. Direct causes of the economic crisis

Let me offer a brief explanation of why the financial economic crisis happened. For many it is not clear why the crisis happened in South Korea only in late 1997, not before. Economists, including those of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), forecasted that Korea would continue its economic growth and that the level of per capita income would double between 1995 and 2001. Until the financial crisis, the Korean economy was performing well: real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at 8 percent per year in the 1990s, inflation was below 5 percent, and the unemployment rate was less than 3 percent (Feldstein 1998: 24). Why then did things turn around so rapidly? It appears that Korea got into economic difficulties in mid-1997 because of a high proportion of private short-term foreign loans and mismatched maturity times between borrowing and investment. South Korea took too many high risks in borrowing foreign capital for investment, and went far beyond its solvency.

From the mid-1980s, South Korea increased its financial links to the ASEAN countries, including China, while the United States and Japan remained by far its largest trading partners. According to the Bank of Korea at the end of 1997, 77.9 percent of Korea's foreign investment in stocks and bonds went to Asian countries. Of this, the shares going to Indonesia and Thailand were 10.2 and 6.1 percent respectively. Korean financial institutions, however, tried to increase business activities using a mismatched method: borrowing from the overseas markets on a short-term basis and investing in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) market on a long-term basis. This mismatched investment was profitable during the economic boom of the region and while short-term interest rates in the international financial market were low.

But a sudden change of market fundamentals in Southeast Asia upset the macroeconomic stability. In the new global situation, there was a rapid contagion effect that hit hard on the vulnerable Korean economy.² In addition, inappropriate management policies from international organizations, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and political instability (i.e. the presidential election) during the economic turmoil exacerbated difficulties in coping with the crisis.

South Korea's economic vulnerability arose from its high proportion of short-term loans, mainly initiated by private-sector financial institutions and enterprises. With the country's estimated \$110 billion of foreign debt, analysts now say the average South Korean company has debts three times its assets, and that many are in far worse shape. Yet some warning signs of the looming economic crisis were evident in South Korea in early 1997, when the Hanbo steel company collapsed, affecting much of the power and moral authority of the Kim Young Sam government.

As the Hanbo case suggested, the connection between wealthy conglomerates and powerful politicians had proved far more persistent. Rapid economic growth has overwhelmed old ways of doing business and politics. South Korea's traditional approach to economic growth involved using banks to make generous loans to the nation's largest business groups to promote strategic industries. Korean banks lent money or loans based on the size of the firm rather than other criteria for risk assessment. Lax loans promoted huge over-investment, causing a 'bubble economy.'³ Computer chips, now South Korea's largest export, is a good case in point. Korean electronics exports were and are over-concentrated in semiconductors. Thus they faced a huge price decline when overcapacity became apparent in the global market. The 1997 crisis started with the collapse of prices for memory chips, down by 70 percent from a year earlier in late 1996. This crippled exports and widened the trade deficit. As a result, South Korea was not earning enough abroad to cover its overseas debt, and its banks were saddled with bad loans to the chaebols.

The Bank of Korea at that time put bad and non-performing loans at \$20 billion, but private estimates go to at least \$50 billion. Amid a spreading economic crisis, many state-controlled banks begged for a government bailout. State intervention in credit extension by banks is responsible for an enormous accumulation of non-performing loans. If there is a systemic risk in South Korea, it stems from the government's ceaseless efforts to tell financial institutions to whom to lend. Political connection often determines who wins and who loses. Financial information is often unreliable or dishonest – in particular, depletion of useable foreign reserves to defend the value of the *won*, along with the lack of transparency in publishing information about useable foreign reserves and elevated investors' speculation in attacking the *won*. Government officials, who had refused to acknowledge the depth of the problem until hours before they asked for the IMF bailout, conceded that the national economy was out of control and in need of fundamental restructuring. The reforms began with a series of strict new fiscal controls demanded by the IMF as a condition of the bailout.⁴ Given high ratios of debt to equity, the IMF's push for high interest rates forced a cascade of bankruptcies of highly indebted but profitable firms.

In response, critics challenged IMF's policy of government spending control, higher taxes, and tight credit increased. For example Feldstein (1998), while admitting the necessity of economic restructuring and liberalization, argues that the IMF prescriptions of budget deficit reduction and a tighter monetary policy did more harm than good. It caused negative growth and high unemployment. The strategies prescribed by the IMF failed to help the countries recovering from economic turmoil, for they were both indiscriminate and inflexible. Indiscriminate promotion of liberalization without an explicit industrial policy has proved to be a short-term, shortsighted and unsustainable strategy. This suggests that the radical free-market reforms promoted by the IMF may not lead to a positive transformation of the Korean economy, but rather its deterioration (Stiglitz 2002).⁵ As proved in the recent economic recovery, a more adequate approach is one that allows Korea to recover its confidence and smoothly readjust to the changing global environment with an orderly rollover of debts.

While many commentators see the recent crisis as mainly a financial one (the liquidity-crunch problem), other views focus on institutional factors such as the ill-designed financial liberalization policy and the economic policy that brought about the overcapacity problem and uncoordinated and excessive investments by the private sector (Amsden and Hikino 1998; Stiglitz 1998; Taylor 1998; Mathews 1998; Chang, Park and Yoo 1998). From this perspective, it was the government's withdrawal from industrial regulation, especially the international capital market, rather than the over-regulation of the interventionist state, that led to the Korean crisis. Let us now look at the structural dimension of the South Korean economy.

2. Background to the economic crisis: the structural weakness

(1) The chaebol-centered economy

The Asian financial crisis not only changed South Korea's economic outlook, it also made the conventional wisdom in the study of South Korean economic success insufficient. There have been concerted efforts to explain the causes of the crisis. Some find its causes in the vulnerable economic structure focusing on the government-business relationship (Clifford and Engardio 1999),⁶ while some in the institutional and macroeconomic contexts include global capital flows (Shin and Chang 2003). Depending on their approaches and theoretical premises, their interpretations and prospects are different. But for the present purpose, I want to discuss the chaebol issue because chaebols have held a central role in the economic crisis as well as the development of the Korean economy.

The capitalist class in South Korea was formed under an umbrella of favorable state policy that allocated foreign aid and loans to big businesses. The close political alliance between political regimes and capitalists shaped the unique pattern of economic development. A strong interventionist state implemented policies to facilitate economic development and encouraged the concentration of capital, thereby fostering the development of a monopoly capitalist class. In this process,

there is an informal division of labor: the state plans and the chaebol executes – an institutional arrangement that allows centralized planning and decentralized execution.⁷ Thus, there has been a mutually reinforcing relationship between the state and the capitalist class in the economic development of South Korea.

As large multi-product firms fueled industrialization, the role of chaebols in Korea's economic development has increased. The Korean big business group was constructed as a major 'capitalist class.' The chaebol group formed distinctive interest groups and became the organizing pivot of the South Korean corporate network. The relationship between the state and chaebols has changed from a cooperative relationship to a more interdependent give-and-take relationship as private industries try to enhance their own power. Chaebols emerged in the 1960s, consolidated in the 1970s and achieved economic hegemony in the 1980s (Kim, E. 1997). However, the capitalists were connected to the power elite only indirectly and informally, which meant that the capitalist class could not consolidate in the social and political spheres as they did in the economic sphere. Under dependent development, South Korean business groups used their industrial base to absorb new technologies, and developed adequate domestic markets to consume the products of the new industries. The conglomerates therefore contributed two main characteristics to the Korean economy: excessive economic concentration and the concentrated structure of equity ownership.

With regard to the role of business, Hobday (1995) argues that the idea of the latecomer firm can explain how technological learning took place behind a technological frontier. He denies the technological leapfrogging thesis and attempts to examine the role of innovation in East Asian firms. Latecomer firms are neither leaders nor followers in the innovation process, but have much catching up to do. In contrast with the normal Western model, East Asia's latecomers reversed the normal cycle of innovation, passing from mature to early stages of the product life-cycle, from a standard to experimental manufacturing process and from incremental production changes to R&D.⁸ Firms learning or borrowing from others are better positioned than innovating firms. It allowed these firms to attain higher productivity and quality at lower costs. Hobday shows how the South Korean firms made the transition from OEM (original equipment manufacture) to ODM (own-design manufacture) through a complex process of learning and maneuvering. He emphasizes the important role of chaebols in South Korean high technology. The technological knowledge of a company can be more easily transmitted to other affiliated companies in such a group because they often have similar technological lines, management styles, company structures and close relationships with each other. The Korean chaebols have unquestionably been a leitmotif of capital accumulation and technological development. The process of technical acquisition drove state intervention, strategic investment and a peculiar mode of accumulation.

However, the puzzle of 'catching up' in the technological frontier cannot be understood completely without considering how these economies accumulated capital so rapidly. Without developing their own technologies, the chaebols grew through reorganizing the technologically disconnected industrial sectors with integration and diversification. The chaebols are preoccupied with their size

and market share, which usually guarantee their efficiency and competitiveness. In most economies, the creation of a new firm is regarded as enhancing competition and efficiency.

In the South Korean case, while the economic power of a chaebol grows as it adds firms in new areas, an individual firm belonging to it is neither as efficient nor as strong as the group itself (Joh and Kim 2003). Chaebols' overall economic power generates so much 'rent' that few of the individual firms under their control ever fail. These additions dilute the chaebols' focus and lure them to encroach upon small- and medium-sized enterprises (Cho 1994: 73). When chaebols push out small and medium-sized enterprises, they are not necessarily more efficient but rather their advantages may come from access to quotas and rents. The size of these rents represents a deadweight efficiency loss for the economy. In this sense, the chaebol's economic efficiency is doubtful when considering the economy as a whole. What we see at the end of asset extravagance is massive debt-financed increases in production capacity, without much regard for real demand and supply. Consequently, South Korea suffered an unhealthy concentration of economic power. Despite significant benefits from the scale economy, the lack of satisfactory growth in small- and medium-sized enterprises reduced the reservoir of proficient entrepreneurship.

Unlike the Japanese industrial groups, the Korean chaebols are not supported by strong financial groups, and are more vulnerable in terms of their excessive leveraging.⁹ The Korean chaebols that are in need of improving their competitiveness have been buying Western firms as a way to gain instant access to overseas markets, brand names and new technology. This is very similar to the patterns of Japanese firms in the 1980s. But it is not certain whether they have strictly followed the Japanese model. First of all, the Korean chaebols have not developed high-quality manufacturing and innovative product design, or the managerial skills that put Japanese firms clearly ahead of the rest of the world. This is because the Korean chaebols are more interested in the expansion of entrepreneurs. Second, South Korean chaebols prefer buying rather than building because of their immediate need for better technology. Third, family capitalism in South Korea has not yet transformed into corporate capitalism, with family ownership rather than institutional ownership operating in most large corporations (Fox 1995).

Substantial evidence leads to the conclusion that economic success by the conglomerates under the prudent state's guidance is only one part of the whole story. The reckless expansion of the conglomerates in pursuit of profits is far from economically rational. The state's heavy intervention in the finance sector deepened corruption in government-business relations, and made it possible for the chaebols to acquire new companies without paying much attention to the profitability of their existing ones.¹⁰ The chaebols invested heavily in facility expansion through huge loans and cross credit. But the system that created them has become increasingly powerless to control them. We are witnessing one of the worst scenarios in the current economic crisis: the chaebols have grown to the extent that their size threatens the economic stability of the nation. Whenever a large group becomes bankrupt, the bankruptcy is generally followed by the collapse of the associated banks from bad debts, and consequently dulling

economic growth triggering more bankruptcies. The lesson is that bigger is not always better; flexibility matters more. In the fast-moving world of high technology, size does not necessarily guarantee innovative breakthroughs.

Since South Korea's economic growth has its foundations in the flourishing of the Korean conglomerates, the state relied on conglomerates to facilitate capital accumulation and industrialization. In this context, some point out the changed relationship between the state and Korean corporations (Bello 1998; Kang 2002; Kong 2002). In contrast to what many economists believe, they argue that the Korean economic crisis occurred not because of too much intervention by the state, but because of insufficient control by the state. According to Bello, what Korea needs now is a re-establishment of the state-private-sector relationship in such a way as to ensure transparency, accountability and social justice. Shin and Chang (2003: 122–4) take this further in saying that corporate reform needs to build a 'second-stage catching-up system' rather than to abandon the risk-taking system based on the state-banks-chaebol nexus altogether. They point out high costs of institutional transition when the Korean government adopted neo-liberal policies and institutions.¹¹

(2) A turnaround of the developmentalist state in the financial system

For a clearer picture of the economic crisis, it is useful to revisit the role of the South Korean state. To begin with, the state's role in the financial system has changed from a positive to a negative one. It is generally true that South Korea, like other NICs, has long had active state intervention in the economy, directing and mediating economic development. This direct participation was based not only on the political authority of the state, but also on its real economic power arising from state ownership of banks and other financial institutions. The state, therefore, exerted a highly discretionary control over big business through its control of loans. Thus, businesses were subjected to a double discipline: a market discipline and a market-conforming network discipline based on the intimate long-term relationship between well-informed state agencies and businesses (Johnson 1980; Amsden 1989; Evans 1995).

State activism played a part in targeted strategic sectors and big businesses, where the private-public boundary was ambiguous or even nonexistent. It is often argued that intervention by the South Korean government in the financial market was a crucial element in its development strategy. The rapid growth owes much to Korea's effective financial structure: successful development directed by significant government planning, but financed largely by competitive public and private financial institutions (Choe and Moosa 1996). The country's high rate of growth was based largely on bank loans and bank sales. The rigid banking system was energized through the creation of new financial intermediaries with unregulated market pricing of loans. As Luedde-Neurath (1986: 76) notes, 'extensive government intervention in the Korean financial market has been the rule rather than the exception, and is being reduced only very gradually.'

It is clear that South Korea's political structures were highly interconnected with business and finance. The South Korean state has used credit as a tool of

industrial policy, organizing contests through councils to promote heavy industries such as shipbuilding, chemicals and automobiles (Wade 1996). The South Korean financial system was based on very high household's bank-deposit savings. For the last few decades, most ordinary South Korean savers have suffered negative real interest rates on their deposits. The resultant capital was passed on to industries in the form of subsidies to encourage investment. The subsidy from preferential credit was large during the 1970s, reflecting a significant gap between bank and curb market interest rates.¹² It also made it possible for firms to mobilize resources on the scale needed to enter major world industries. The presence of strong government influence in credit allocation indicates that a hierarchical mechanism of economic coordination was in operation, using selective credit allocation as the main instrument for interactively implementing its industrial policies in order to achieve dynamic efficiency.

This selective credit allocation was initially effective in promoting and managing changing industrial investment. Until the 1980s, Korea can be seen as contradicting the conventional view that financial repression has a negative effect on economic growth. It is possible that financially repressive policies by the state can play a positive role in economic growth of a developing country in the early stages of development, when private firms are weak and markets are rudimentary.

However, the changing level of development in the financial sector, and the increasing openness of the South Korean economy to international capital flows, have meant that directed credit programs have declined in importance as the Korean economy has liberalized its financial sectors.¹³ In addition, deregulation and further liberalization of the capital market in 1993 and joining the OECD in 1996 helped firms raise funds overseas with lower interest rates rather than from domestic financial markets. Unlike the 1970s and mid-1980s when the government guaranteed major chaebols' foreign borrowing and intervened in cases of insolvency, the government began to slowly move towards liberalization from the late 1980s.

While the government moved towards deregulation and liberalization, no systematic reform of the financial system occurred (Park, Y. 1998: 14-17). This meant that South Korea's financial system lacked the regulatory structure appropriate to an open and aggressive global financial market. Despite financial liberalization, the South Korean state stressed the principle of reform in vague terms, causing confusion in the financial sector. The absence of prudential regulation in the process of capital market liberalization allowed Korean banks to make high-risk investments without considering the sustainability and liquidity of foreign debt, and encouraged the chaebols to invest their profits speculatively.

3. Changes in the mode of accumulation

(1) The post-authoritarian regime of accumulation¹⁴

In this section, I will discuss a restricted role of state intervention, the weakening leadership of the economic bureaucracy and the excessive reliance on informal policy measures, which I argue contributed to the present economic crisis.

Although Korea's political economy has shown its resilience in the face of economic liberalization and political democratization, the strength of these forces calls for new development policies and structural transformation.¹⁵ It was only after the economic crisis that the Kim Dae Jung government implemented radical changes for an effective response to the constraints and opportunities in the new world economy.

Globalization as a 'self-reflective project' (McMichael 1995) leads to pressure from international capital on the state-business complex. Facing new global dynamics, neither the state nor businesses in South Korea were sufficiently prepared. To understand the nature of Korean economic crisis, we need to take into account the political, economic and social context of the production system as well as global and regional factors.

The reform effort can be tracked in the partial liberalization of the political and market systems in the late 1980s. The opening up of Korea's financial sector had far-reaching implications for the government-industry relationship and for its political economy as a whole. The growth of power of big business and the impact of the global economy forced the government to disengage from the style of intervention that has evolved since the 1960s. However, the process is a gradual one and so is the emergence of new market-conforming forms of intervention – such as the promotion of R&D, and the development of small and medium enterprises responsive to world market trends.

One example of the changing government strategy is the attempt to reform the state-owned enterprise sector and rebuild the institutional and regulatory relationships between the government, owners and managers. The reform was aimed at the credibility of the government and the sustainability of its reform programs.¹⁶ Another example is strengthened government support for small- and medium-sized enterprise financing.¹⁷ A change in the loan market structure from a regulated or monopolistic market to a competitive one is suggested as a way to solve the problem of small- and medium-sized enterprise financing (Lee, H. 1996).

New forms of cooperation are needed between business, financial institutions and government to solve a chronic problem of bad loans by the chaebols. The chaebol reforms depend on the reform of the financial system, because it is difficult to restructure management without solving the debt issue. Restructuring the chaebols is essential for reforming the Korean economic structure, as the chaebols have historically dominated the South Korean economy. The chaebols are now required to make their management transparent, refrain from excessive borrowing and become more careful in their investments.¹⁸ The restructuring of the chaebols is designed to increase specialization and international competitiveness. This means a shift in the chaebols' focus from scale of their operation to quality and productivity. Although the so-called 'big-deal' among the five biggest chaebols in semiconductors and power production has not yet yielded tangible progress because of the conflicting interest in management rights, the restructuring is seen to be an avenue through which the chaebols can filter out unprofitable businesses.¹⁹

With increasing incorporation into the capitalist world-system, and the level of development of the economy, market forces may have a strong impact on government policy for industrial decentralization. But the inconsistent policies

and institutionalized authoritarianism of the state bureaucracy are the underlying constraints on decentralization reform. The developmentalist (or corporatist) state, as a key agent in the processes of modernization, has a weakening transformative capacity in the world economy. The delegitimization of the authoritarian state has accompanied collective mobilization and democratization. A review of policy-driven state intervention reveals the limitation of the developmentalist state model.²⁰ But the concept of intervention should not be viewed in a linear or cyclic relationship between policy, implementation and outcomes of planned projects. Intervention is an ongoing socially constructed and negotiated process that involves cultural factors as well as economic risks and interests of the participants. State intervention in South Korea substantially improved living standards. It has extended state power into new spheres as the state exploited social problems and weakened social structures in line with its expanding agenda. With the economic growth, the divergent structural mechanisms regulated the power of the state and limited the extent of its intervention. The character of Korean capitalism is also changing as democratization and global economic forces gradually displace the instruments of economic intervention established in the authoritarian era.

Statist theories give careful consideration of the role of industrial policy and its major instruments such as administrative guidance, focusing on its success in achieving growth. They often downplay the dangers of indebted industrialization and unbalanced growth. An increasing number of studies suggest that domestic capital has had a more independent influence and the capacity to resist state intervention than previously recognized. State-business relations were more complex than statist theories had argued.²¹ Also the importance of business initiatives needs to be considered as well as the government's economic growth strategy. In the South Korean case, the chaebols have grown big enough to suffocate competition, while state control of finance has crippled the banking system. As Hoogvelt argues (1997: 213–6), state direction of industry makes less sense when private firms have grown more sophisticated.²²

The statist approach also fails to analyze the major social struggles and political conflicts, and the significance of geopolitical environment. With the establishment of limits on political power, the formation of populist groups in society, and the efforts to secure new rights in a broadening political arena, it is difficult for the state to favor business interests for a protectionist state over labor's demands for a welfare state. In addition, in light of the acute food shortage and a possibility of breakdown in state control in the North, the rapid and painful restructuring of the South Korean economy may aggravate dangerous uncertainty on the Korean peninsula. Political leaders will need to pay closer attention to the social and political costs of economic reforms.

Weiss argues for a distinction between state intervention and state transformative capacity (1998: xii).²³ She believes that the recent Korean crisis stems not from excessive state intervention, but from weakened state capacity to govern the economy (Weiss 1998: xiv–xv, 41–82). Weiss argues that the state's capacity has been weakened over the years, as the chaebols became more independent of the state-run financial institutions after the partial liberalization of financial system

in the 1980s (1998: 81–2). She argues that failing to recompose its capacity for guiding and coordinating economic change, the state is no longer capable as it used to be. While the state successfully transformed its capacity from autonomy to embedded autonomy in the industrialization process, it failed to develop ‘governed interdependence’ in a highly competitive internationalized economic system.²⁴

The question is how the South Korean state will regain its early transformative capacity in response to changes in the world economy. It will take some time for South Korea to consolidate a newly configured development model. Considering the nature of Korea’s economic structure and policies, new dynamics between the state and market may evolve in a neo-statist direction, with the state not completely out of the picture.

(2) The redistribution of power between capital and labor

The highly authoritarian state was capable of controlling and transforming Korean society while mobilizing production-oriented alliances. Class-consciousness and labor movements were easily suppressed when a society was seen to face the real threat of communism (Koo 1994). State control of labor made it much harder for the working classes in general, and for those in export-oriented and foreign-invested sectors in particular, to push for redistribution of wealth and power through collective action. The development strategy pursued by the state and the capitalist class bypassed issues such as working conditions or the environment. Workers were constrained legally and politically, even socially from taking collective action.

However, export-led economic growth provided new opportunities for social mobility, with the rise of a large middle class and a working class. The transition to democracy in the late 1980s opened the way for the development of labor movements. Newly organized workers became the most salient and influential social forces in shaping the nature of democratization.

The newly organized labor, however, has yet to adjust to changing social environments. After democratic transition, the state has intervened and promoted divisions in the working class between unskilled workers in the manufacturing industries and relatively deprived but skilled workers in the growing industries. In addition, the collapse of communism inflicted a fatal blow to political radicalism, which envisaged a socialist society as the most desirable alternative to authoritarian capitalism.

In addition, the general trends toward globalization demand an industrial restructuring in response to the erosion of competitive advantage. As the Korean economy has been subjected to rapid liberalization, labor unions found themselves in conditions unfavorable for working-class politics. The workers’ bargaining power became increasingly limited because of the vulnerability of the overall economy.

To maximize profits with lowest possible labor costs, South Korea’s chaebols have sought to move their operations out of the country to places like China. The shift of production and technology from Korea to lower-cost locations eliminates

jobs in Korea and opens its domestic high-tech industries to competitive challenge. On the other hand, small- and medium-sized businesses face serious labor shortages following wage increases. Under the bifurcated economic structure where small- and medium-sized factories are subordinate to the chaebol, small- and medium-sized businesses try to solve labor shortages by relocating production lines abroad or importing cheap foreign labor (Park, H. 1998).

The consequences of the current liberal turn in the Korean economy are more significant for the working class than for other sectors in society. The forces of liberalization and deregulation have a negative social impact on wages, employment opportunities and division of labor. In response to these, Korean workers changed their orientation from more political radicalism to more narrow economic pragmatism, in defending themselves against massive layoffs and company closedowns. The subsequent financial crisis and conditions set by the IMF for bailing out the economy provided both conditions and justification for workers' displacement.²⁵

Given the longstanding economic structural imbalance, South Korea can make adjustments only with painful economic sacrifices. Structural adjustment cannot be separated from the political process. Since adjustment inflicts uneven social costs on society, it invites political opposition and contestation. However, it will not be possible to call for one-sided painful sacrifice. The economic crisis has weakened not only the working class but also some sectors of the capitalist class. Class compromise is still limited in its scope and less effective, partly because of the main difficulty in mobilizing a political consensus between capital and labor, and partly because of the dynamics of international economics.

4. South Korea in transition

Korea has achieved remarkable economic development over the past four decades. The pace and size of this growth cannot be questioned. A less asked question, however, has been whether or not this economic growth brought about a corresponding improvement in the quality of life of its people. Unfortunately any discussion of the other side of growth-centered economic development has typically been overshadowed by the statistics of unprecedented growth reflected in the balance sheets of economists and politicians. For this, the economic crisis and subsequent recovery efforts is as a window of opportunity in which Korean modernity can be re-examined.

Clearly, the majority of Koreans have benefited from industrialization and urbanization. This was particularly the case following the success of the democratization and labor movements in the later part of the 1980s, which lifted political suppression and allowed other civil rights movements to gain momentum. In part, such democratization was possible only because of the economic growth and the resultant structural changes in social classes, the growth of the middle classes and the diversification of social movements.

A heightened public concern over a 'crisis' of the development model from the various sectors of civil society led to various reform efforts. These efforts were

directed at ensuring South Korea's continuing global competitiveness, overcoming problems of corruption and degenerating social values and norms and regenerating South Korea's devastated natural environment. However, in most cases, these reform efforts have overall resulted in short-lived and ineffective solutions.

The reform programs tend to focus on the more tangible aspects of the present economic crisis. The economic reforms focus on the evolving new economic, financial and development strategies that can best respond to a changing global environment. This approach can be successful in terms of restructuring South Korea's economy, but is far from offering an alternative model of development that can avoid the pitfalls of the existing model in the future. Let me examine this in more detail now.

To see the 1997 economic crisis as solely a structural problem is to run the risk of addressing just a part of the overall dilemma. The current economic crisis in South Korea is not just a financial crisis. It is part of a large problem embedded deep in Korean society. Holger (1998) brings us a new dimension of cultural structure in her interpretation of South Korean economic development.²⁶ For her, there is a 'Korean psyche' profoundly informing the deep structure of Korean society. She highlights the historical effects of the Korean War on the Koreans' psyche: the traumatic experience that triggered a pattern of aggressive behavior and crystallized into a pattern of sadomasochism. According to her, Korean society has been rebuilt on a spirit of aggressiveness, militarism and domination. Society has been exploited by its members to the extent of the destruction of natural and social relationships.

Rapid industrialization and urbanization transformed social structures, cultural characteristics and human relationships. Economic growth was felt urgently in the conditions of territorial division and the difficult international relations. As the Koreans continually sought rapid, large-scale growth in the economic field, social relations become too commercialized, and people become more interested in individual self and the entrepreneurial interests than in human relations (Kim 1986).

Kendall (1996) tells us that Korean capitalists, especially those who are engaged in high-risk, petty-capitalist enterprises, tend to visit shamans to address the seemingly arbitrary fluctuations of good and bad fortune. This tendency is part of the high-risk Korean society where 'compressed modernity' provides open opportunities for upward mobility but at the same time puts everyday living in great danger (Chang 1999). Despite democratization and economic reform, many political and economic contradictions remain unsolved. Citizens, drawing critical attention to the deteriorating quality of their real lives, recognize the destructive consequences of modernization. An alternative notion of modernity, 'reflexive modernity,' is discussed as a new epistemological and practical device to ameliorate the 'rush-to modernity' (Han 1995).²⁷

Rapid economic development has produced an unprecedented environmental crisis. A few decades of concentrated industrial activity has changed the geography of the natural environment and contaminated the biosphere. This indiscriminate destruction of the environment has brought about many environmental disasters and disputes.²⁸ Neo-liberalism and globalization, however, reinforce

economic values and instrumental rationality through a new strategy of development, which Sachs calls 'neo-development' (Sachs 1996). They seek to address the environmental consequences of development with the concept of sustainability. Unfortunately, such a program still falls into the framework of technocentrism and managerialism. To think about economic restructuring within the narrow framework of economic rationality is not enough for sustainable development.

Bello (1995) emphasizes the necessity of planning and acting from below. He argues that an alternative to sustainable development should come from the grassroots in their challenge to correct the alienating and repressive consequences of development 'from above.' To resolve the inherent tensions between rapid economic growth and social and environmental problems, and to ensure Korea's positive integration into the world system, South Korea needs to re-evaluate its modern project. As long as the overall modern project is reduced to economic rationality alone, we have seen only one side of modernity. It has been a key purpose of Part III of this book to demonstrate the normative and political significance of the challenge Korea faces today and the need for a rethinking of Korea's modern project.

Part IV

Nationalism and reunification

8 National identity, nationalism and nation building in Korea

1. Nation-state and nationalism

The nation-state, nationality and nationalism are the central features of modernity. Expressed differently, modernity is inconceivable without the nation-state, the nation-state system, and the related phenomena of nationality and nationalism. Certainly, this is true of Korea. For many who see the world through the modernist lens, the nation-state is the locus of territorial political authority, and the central political agent structuring global conditions. Some admit that the character and capacities of the nation-state are undergoing significant changes, reflecting the commercial and technological globalization of society. Perspectives advocating the existence of a postmodern condition emphasize globalism and localism, contextualism and difference, and question the contemporary relevance and even desirability of the concept of nation-state for social theory. This debate between modernists and postmodernists about the status of nation and its cognate concepts can be better appreciated by taking a historical view of the debate and examining the contested nature of nationalism.

Like modern state formation, nation building and the development of nationalism are embedded in a long historical process which began to unfold in the fifteenth century and gathered pace in subsequent centuries. Historically, nations and nation-states emerged because of a range of economic, cultural and political changes in Great Britain and Western Europe that led to a greater centralization of power, the firming up of territorial boundaries, and the striving by certain social classes to bring political and cultural boundaries into closer correspondence (Greenfeld 1992; Mann 1993). One consequence of these developments was the idea of the nation. The rise of nation transformed the social and political orders, and thereby recast many of the economic and political problems.

The term 'nation' was used to both denote and support the sovereignty of the ruling class in a given territory. In regimes of absolutism in Western Europe, the nation was synonymous with the monarchy's centralized state. The sovereignty of the state found its visible embodiment in the prince whose Will was assumed to be that of the state. As a result the semblance of the nation-state emerged. Later in the eighteenth century, with the rise of egalitarian ideals such as liberty, equality and fraternity, the concept of nation was equated with the people. The nation (people)

became the source of sovereignty of the state. The state functioned at the mandate of the nation and the nation provided legitimacy to the state. States set about constructing nations out of the cultural, linguistic and historical materials at hand, simultaneously promoting, and in some cases inventing, national traditions, and repressing customs, beliefs and languages that did not fit with the nationalist vision of a unified and homogenous nation. This novel form of the nation–state nexus was first developed in Britain and consolidated during and after the French and US revolutions. It was extended as a result of industrialization and the political and economic changes that it wrought, and became the template to which other peoples aspired, first within Europe and then in the world beyond.

Nations are at the core of the cultural formation of modernity. Nationalism sometimes stems from a religious culture and replaces religion as the primary cultural mechanism of socio-cultural integration.¹ At the same time, the principle of nationhood is bound to an allegiance to religious faith (Gellner 1981). Nations also are the symbol of the dynamic of the modern and the antique. As observed in post-communist and post-colonial societies, the arrival of the modern typically triggers the archaic as compensation. Gellner (1990) finds that despite the communist revolution, pre-communist cultural traditions, social norms, religious beliefs and kinship ties provided the basis for collective identity in the Soviet Union. The degree to which the modern and the traditional coexist in national culture, and give momentum to the processes of national identity irrespective of the types of political and economic systems, is striking. Nowhere perhaps is it more striking than in Korea.

Ernest Gellner (1987) has developed what is among the best known of modernist commentaries on the rise of nations and nationalism. According to Gellner, the nation and nationalism emerge only under modern conditions. The state, he argues, mobilizes people through institutional structures including public education and various other cultural industries. In this framework, the first nations were constructed by states, rather than states being expressions of pre-existing nations and nationalism. He argues that growth-oriented industrial society is strongly impelled towards linguistic and cultural homogeneity within each political entity, while in traditional societies there were few factors making for large-scale linguistic and cultural homogeneity (1987: 14). The nation is thus a product of the transition from traditional agrarian societies to modern industrial societies. Nationalism is in turn the ideological product of the state's invention of nations.

Gellner sees nationalism as principally a cultural phenomenon, and as an artificially created symbolic unity that needs to be strengthened as industrialization and modernization proceed. Nationalism is also interpreted as a political force that strengthens national unity (Gellner 1981: 1). Thus, for Gellner, nationalism is a new way of linking culture and politics. His main concern is on the convergence of culture and territory in industrial society. Although he admits that nationalism often makes use of the past in the construction of its ideologies, it is the modern state that makes nationalism work. Here, Gellner overlooks the complexity of the link between the continuing vitality of premodern ethnic elements and the formation of modern nations and nationalism. Furthermore, his functionalist modernization theory fails to do justice to the distinction between the Western pattern of nationalism and non-Western forms of nationalism, which

were found before industrialization and modernization. Japan is a case in point. There, the emergence of a significant nationalism preceded industrialization. The Japanese modern state was rebuilt on the ground of cultural and institutional traditions, from which a nationalistic ideology was driven.

Anthony Smith (1986) challenges Gellner's theory of nationalism and argues that modern nations have an intimate connection to their ethnic histories, which cannot be explained by the requirements of modernity. Far from a radical break with the past, Smith remarks that modernity represents a form of cultural continuity with the past. In other words, modern nationalism crucially depends on its ethnic past, in the form of collective memories that contain the components for its reproduction. Modern nationalism cannot be wholly traceable to the rise of modern states and nations, but instead retains some vital link to primordial ethnic pasts. This is the reason why people are drawn to the concept of nation as their primary focus of solidarity and loyalty in the modern world. Smith's theory of nationalism is plausible, as most modern nations have developed with collective frames of reference that draw upon attachments to soil and ethnic solidarity initiated in premodern 'ethnic cores.' Nevertheless, the modern principle of nationality, with its emphasis on the link between national community and an existing or envisaged state, is a very recent conceptual fabrication. Smith's analysis omits this, or perhaps denies it, because he concentrates so heavily on the role of premodern ethnic sentiments in shaping modern nations and nationalism.² Hence while Smith along with Gellner offers important partial insights into the phenomena, their analyses on their own are insufficient for understanding the genesis and dissemination of modern nations and nationalism.

Greenfeld (1992), too, disputes the link between modernization and nationalism, arguing that nationalism preceded both capitalism and democracy. She reasons that the modern world is the result of nationalism rather than vice versa. Conceptualizing nationalism as an idea that equates individuals' identity with a nation, Greenfeld emphasizes psychological mechanisms, specifically status anxiety and resentment, which convert group identity crises into the acceptance of a national idea (1992: 15–16).³ She draws on political and cultural constructivism in an analysis of the origins of nationalism, and argues that nationalist ideologies were initially created by elites as they ascended to prominence in early modern states (Greenfeld 1996). The elites were actively involved in the promulgation of national identity and consciousness, and nationalist ideologies were used to justify their claims to power. The specificity of the structural constraints of the involved groups, and their character and experience, necessarily influenced the nature of the national identity and consciousness, which they helped to form.

Drawing on the work of Weber but giving it a very different twist, Greenfeld emphasizes that nationalism is the primary building block of modernity (1992: 17).⁴ While developing a socio-historical interpretation of nationalism, she tends to exaggerate the significance of political factors (i.e. state policies) at the expense of socio-cultural and economic factors. Nationalism was (is) at least partially responsible for the creation of such phenomena as modernization, state formation and democracy. In Greenfeld's framework, the various types of nationalism are reduced to a rather simplistic dichotomy – individualistic nationalism versus collectivist nationalism.⁵

Hobsbawm provides a socio-cultural and political framework for the overall constellation of nationalism. While Smith (1983) focuses on a constitutive premodern ethnic legacy, Hobsbawm emphasizes the artificial construction of tradition. He defines nationalism as congruence between nation and state, and emphasizes the crucial role that the cultural and political elites have played in constructing the nation. There are multiple ways for the state to politicize the mass consciousness and the societal response to it. In the process, there are bound to be struggles over the form that nationalism takes and the character of the nation and state being constructed. As Hobsbawm's (1992) historical study shows, nationalism has itself changed and has taken different historical and social forms. In other words, nationalism has meant different things in different periods. Nationalism has been exploited both by political and cultural elites and by the masses for particular purposes. Yet whatever the particular form of nationalism, and whatever the social class articulating that form, the 'invention of tradition' remains critical to their success.

Hobsbawm says: 'The term "invented tradition" is used in a broad, but not imprecise sense. It includes both "traditions" actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and datable period – a matter of a few years perhaps – and establishing themselves with great rapidity' (1983: 1). History, myths and memories are reconstructed to infuse new state identities with legitimacy, and to foster a certain type of group identity and sentiment. That is, the national past is reproduced in forms of history, and collective memories and identities are created from selected bits of the past.⁶

In a sense, memories are products of an interpretative process by which historical events are negotiated by individuals. Social memory is inherently subjective and structured by language, collectively held ideas and experiences shared with others. Constantly responding to changing conditions, social memories contribute to the creation of community boundaries and the formation of national identification. Social actors take part in social processes from which representations of large societal identities continually result. Identities and other representations are continuously produced by individual and collective social actors who construct and transform themselves through these practices and relations (through alliance, competition, struggle and negotiation) with other social actors. The transformation of these representations obviously implies the transformation of the very subjects – social actors – which these identities define; an attempt to define and legitimize a new political and national identity replete with self-consciousness, self-criticism and self-doubt. In this context, it can be said that cultures and identities constitute symbolic social constructions, rather than being passively inherited legacies (Castoriadis 1987: 146–56).⁷ Hence, the work of producing symbolic representations is permanent and may include, at least in theory, cases of unconscious making/construction and fully consciously intentioned constructions – i.e. inventions.

The concept of nationalism corresponds to a particular theoretical position with regard to the nation and the nation-state. It concerns the right to form territorial states and exert sovereign control within state boundaries. As in all kinds of social formations, modern nation-states are composed of political and cultural elements. As Cohen (1974) argues, politics cannot be purely instrumental, but

always involve symbols that have the power of creating loyalty and a feeling of belongingness. On this same point, Anderson (1983) argues that nationalism derives its force from a combination of political legitimation and emotional power. The nation as a political association and the nation as a cultural community with a common history and sentiment have converged within defined territories – i.e. the nation-state – although the two concepts of the nation are sometimes in conflict (see Rejori and Enloe 1974).⁸

Nationalism can thus be better understood as an attempt to address the deepening conflict between the imperative of a community and the other exogenous factors that challenge national sovereignty and development. An alternative approach is needed to take into account the cultural and political content of nationalism, such as myths, history, collective identity, political culture, as well as international (geopolitical) relations, which usually go beyond the boundary of ethnicity and cultural homogeneity. In the following sections, I will focus on the complexity and ambiguity of Korean nationalism, drawing on the various theories and approaches mentioned above. The underlying ambiguity finds expression in different nationalist ideologies and opens up new possibilities of imaginary variations in nation-building process.

2. Struggle for national identity: Korean nationalism

Korea is an unusual example of one nation and two states that shares a common history, culture, language and underlying belief system.⁹ These commonalities facilitate a common national identity. Yet this national identity has been dramatically affected by changes in both cultural traditions and political-economic structure, because of the Japanese colonialism and the division of the country after the War. Korea became a country where two states confront each other in a situation where there is arguably one nation.¹⁰ The two Koreas lay rival claims to rather well-established national identities and representations by individual and collective social actors. On the one hand, Koreans share a common national identity based on a 'symbolic construction.' This symbolic construction is an aggregate outcome of the inputs of diverse nationalist actors and political ideologies, and a selective reflection on the culture and historical experience. On the other hand, despite exceptionally favorable civilizational preconditions for the construction of national identity, unfavorable geopolitical conditions continue to obstruct the development of any attempts to unite nation and states into one.

(1) Korean national identity in the making

The contemporary conflation of nation and state is derived from the convergence of the imagined community of the nation and the state. The state in turn draws its modern legitimacy from the nation that gives it a more complex and universal legal basis (Anderson 1990: 94). The modern nation-state concept, with its emphasis on the equality of sovereign states under international law, was imposed upon Korea by Western and Japanese imperialism when the Korean state could

not fully comprehend the new reality or be prepared for the new challenges that resulted. The convergence of many internal and international forces from the late 1870s onwards made the opening up of Korea inevitable, and this turned out to be nothing less than disastrous for Korea's independence. Under the new world system, the social elite and the government had to struggle with the question of reform in the political, military and educational systems. Imported nationalist ideas were reinterpreted and adjusted to the internal reality of the country.

As a result, several reformist groups were born among the dominant class: those who clung to Sino-centric ethics and social norms and worked with the 'moderates' of the oligarchy grouped around Queen Min; those who were inspired by the Meiji example and wanted 'radical' reforms; and those who formed a fluid, autonomous constituency and were seeking to combine 'Eastern ethics with Western technology' (Lee 1984: Chapter 13).¹¹ Ultimately, these groups' reform projects were not successful. This is partly because many of the reforms had no true 'psychological' preparation (Greenfeld) on the part of the initiators. The reformists were more interested in replacing the ruling bureaucrats than changing the structure itself. It was also partly because the reforms were proclaimed 'defensively' by the government as a reaction to the increasing foreign influences on domestic politics and economy.¹² The government remained in the hands of the Confucian elite. They wanted to achieve reforms within a Confucian order. Such reformists reinforced their own power base, as they were willing to implement only such reforms that would preserve or expand their own status and authority (Park 1979; Deuchler 1977).

Moreover, the centripetal polity of Korea (Henderson 1968) suppressed any innovational efforts from below or from outside the government. Under the centralized government in the Choson dynasty, the position of king lay ambiguously between an absolute monarch and a mere figurehead. Despite the king's powerful position, the bureaucrats could put pressure on the monarch through mass resignations and a 'righteous' counsel. This kind of balance of power between the monarch and the aristocratic bureaucrats had been in place for a long time, but its function fluctuated, depending on the political circumstances of the times, the degree of unity of faction(s) in power and the monarch's character and capability (Palais 1975). One can argue therefore that a centralized state itself did not necessarily provide sufficient conditions for modernization and modern nation-state building.

On the other hand, there was also a grassroots reformist movement – Tonghak (or Kabo) peasant rebellions of 1894 influenced by the indigenous religion (Tonghak or Cheondogyo).¹³ The main slogans of the uprising were directed against the corrupt government and Japanese imperialism. As a belief system, Tonghak provided the rural masses, who were extremely exploited under the unstable and corrupt ruling Confucian order, with a new vision of Man and society. Thus, the Tonghak peasant rebellions were a peasant nationalist movement. The nationalist leaders managed to mobilize the peasants, connecting the process of agrarian identity construction to broader processes of national identity formation and nationalism.¹⁴ The Tonghak leadership preached not only egalitarian ideals,

but also popular culture and Confucian and Taoist symbols and myths. Despite its vision of human emancipation, the Tonghak peasant rebellions fell short of destroying the dominant political power due to Japanese military intervention (Choe 1986: 223–36). In spite of the failure of early efforts at modernization and nation-state building, more attempts were made by intellectuals and mass movements throughout the colonial period in search of a new identity to ensure Korea's survival in the turbulent times.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the view of the sovereign nation-state embedded in Western theories of civilization and social Darwinism was appropriated by Korean intellectuals as a strategy to stave off imperialist powers. The concept of sovereignty was useful in the formation of a politically autonomous nation-state out of the colonial domination. Contrary to the common belief that nationalism impedes globalization, the concept of sovereignty, and therefore nationalism, was used to open up Korea and integrate it into the world system through colonialism.¹⁵

Korean nationalism was defined in collective terms to defend political sovereignty and cultural values against both Western imperialism and the Japanese threat. Tiryakian and Durham (1988: 7) identify Korean nationalism as a case of the second major wave of nationalism, which has developed in reaction to imperial colonialism. This reaction was associated with the twofold challenge of Japanese and Western imperialism. In this regard, an interesting question can be raised – that is, why Japan became a more effective catalyst of Korean nationalism than the Western powers. It involves not only Japan's outright invasion and its thorough colonization of Korea, but also the Koreans' psychological sense of 'superiority' in terms of civilization and cultural traditions.

Korea's coerced integration into the world system incited and shaped the reconstruction of national identity. The notion of political sovereignty assumed by the nation-state presupposes a certain pattern of collective identity that is based on the particular self-understanding of a national community as a culturally 'cohesive' and a geographically delimited entity. The rise of Korean nationalism coincided with the crisis of the old kingdom. Defining national identity as a historically contingent social construct, various intellectuals reappraised and reinvented the diverse representations that came to stand for the genuine nationhood. Efforts to create a national consciousness paved the way for a new modern nation-state. In this process, tradition was politicized by intellectuals for a transformed social consciousness. It often reflected their longing for a deep tradition, history and an uncolonized culture.¹⁶ Cultural group identity in Korea emerged in its modern form through the efforts of nation building against Japanese colonial rule. During the colonial rule, the strategies and goals of social movements were largely determined by the trend toward modern social constructs, nationalism and the desire to escape colonial rule.

National identity was activated and manipulated by members of a small select group of people in the modern era – principally politicians and intellectuals (Greenfeld 1992). The effort to construct and impose a new image of Korean national identity against the tradition of inferiority stemming from the colonial

experience has been reflected both in the political agenda and in prevalent intellectual assumptions. For most of its history, Korean thinkers visualized their country primarily in cultural terms, as an entity distinguished from other countries by its cultural homogeneity, its population with a common set of myths, legends, stories, rituals and imagery. Although the Japanese colonial rule narrowed Korean nationalism to the immediate task of regaining national political independence, nationalism constituted legitimate resistance and provided a national identity with great appeal, united by a common cultural core (Schmid 2002).

The common cultural core is a 'myth' embedded in the subconscious of the people (Connor 1994: 36–48; Smith 1991: Chapters 1 and 2). The genealogical myth has a symbolic importance in cultural identity. The Korean nation was highly homogenous, believing in a common origin in pre-history, producing a strong collective sense of 'oneness' (Schmid 1997; Shin *et al.* 1999). Korean nationalists preserved primordial/ethnic model of national integration in the history of nation building. Ethnic homogeneity has been epitomized by the *Tangun* myth, the founder of Korean nation, which assumes a common ancestry of Korean people and thus primordial loyalty to the nation.¹⁷

The establishment of a unified ethno-national identity in Korea can be interpreted as a response to the threat of foreign powers. Korea's long isolational policy, bitter colonial experience and the division of nation further reinforced the strength of national solidarity against foreign countries. The experience of vulnerability and subordination in the world order has served to intensify national efforts of self-preservation in Korea. The nation has preserved its national identity within the earlier Chinese world order, survived aggressive Japanese colonial assimilation policies and maintained its autonomy despite military and economic dependence on the United States. A strong survival mentality has been developed along with Korean nationalist ideology.

National identities and representations are constructed within particular historical, institutional contexts and relations of power. It is important to take into account the national and global orders, including imperialism and the Cold War, and the local and national agents who represent and negotiate with other states and organizations. While the ideological spectrum of post-war Korea is complex, the volatile environment between 1945 and 1953 witnessed a hard search for the national self that had been disturbed (lost) during the decades of colonialism. However, the absence of consensus among the political elite and the great-power conflict superimposed on internal struggles led to the subordination of the nation to the state. This does not mean that the state is to be locked out of the definitions of nation, but only that the ethical imperatives linking action and accountability present a more complex reality of the division of the nation.

The intellectuals generally supported the post-colonial nation-state and the political organization of power in the making of a new national identity. Post-colonial Korean society has been imagined, reconstructed and theorized in its relationship to corresponding structures of action such as local communities, the nation-state and interstate systems. During the process, the interests of the elite and the masses were entwined. Common historical roots were depicted as being forged in

struggles against a common enemy – initially the Japanese colonizer and, since the Korean War, the communist North Korean state. Politicians and bureaucrats were and are well aware of the importance of the nation's (in)security. Ambiguity and indeterminacy at each level of the system were also essential to its functioning, because they provided a space for the power elite to manipulate people into strategically invoked, interest-driven, fear-induced, coercively imposed or traditionally grounded consensus.

This identity is equally dependent on the existence of a civil society distinct from the state. Despite the fact that the modern nation-state is increasingly able to shape consciousness and expand its control over everyday life, not all the sources of ordinary existence were exhausted. Other forms of collective experience always remain outside the formal structures of the state, providing the state with values and symbols. The complex and sometimes conflicting needs of society call for powerful symbols to provide a framework for societal integration. Nationalism is an excellent source of such integration as it presents sectional interests as general ones. After the displacement of colonial rule in Korea, a nationalist definition of society was imposed and reinforced to create a 'psychological subject' or a 'national self.' This in turn was used to define the 'good citizen.' Once this nationalist consensus was achieved, it tended to fuel other nationalist elements, including self-determination and ethnic exclusionism. The different forms that the identity-making process took, and the different social environments in which national ideologies were articulated, gave rise to distinct versions of nationalism.

(2) Korean nationalism, the contested ideologies

Korean nationalism became a mass phenomenon through the collective experience of harsh Japanese rule. The nationalist movement reflected diverse political and cultural agendas as to how to transform a feeble state into a modern nation-state. Nationalist groups were divided into two major groups of coalition – the cultural nationalists and the radical nationalists. This division stemmed from radically different conceptions of nation, and different approaches to political programs, tactics and elite–mass relations. The division within the nationalist movement weakened its ability to unite the masses in political action. Furthermore, the schism between the cultural nationalists and the radicals later found expression in post-colonial Korean nationalism, which became consolidated into the antagonistic nationalist ideologies of the two Koreas. It is important to examine the ideological difference between the two nationalisms.

Following the 'March First Movement' in 1919,¹⁸ the colonial government implemented a 'cultural policy' as a correction to the former militarist policy. The 1920s was a time of severe disturbance within Korea, despite or perhaps because of the relative leniency of the Japanese towards political activity during this period. It was nationalism that awakened the people to visions of a new political order and national economy. Korean cultural nationalists were sincere in their conviction that cultural development among Koreans would prevent Japanese culture from taking root, thus making its political control difficult. However,

the cultural nationalists' framework limited the scope for radical change. As Robinson (1988) points out, the cultural nationalists drew their ideological inspiration from Western liberalism and evolutionism. They emphasized gradual reform, education and economic development as a base for national development and independence. Cultural nationalists tried to separate the state from the nation in order to legitimize their apolitical approach. They upheld Korean 'nationhood' in the absence of a Korean 'state,' with an emphasis on moral values and spiritual integrity. Cultural nationalists viewed the enlightened elite as a core leadership for reform and (re)construction of a strong national identity.

Here, we need to mention the influence of Protestant nationalism on Korean nationalism.¹⁹ Protestant nationalist leaders were deeply involved in most phases of the nationalist movement in both Korea and abroad (Wells 1990). Most of them were the landed elite with a Confucian background and had direct or indirect contact with Western ideas. The Protestant nationalism was led by the 'Independence Club,' and later the 'Enlightenment Movement' and Christian efforts at self-sufficiency, such as Cho Mansik's Gandhi-style 'Korean Products Promotion Movement.' Protestant nationalist leaders actively participated in modern education, publication and economic activities.

Radical nationalists criticized cultural nationalism for its lack of an independent ideal and the leadership-mass interaction. After the failure of the March First independence movement, radical nationalists began to be more interested in Marxism and the Russian Revolution than Western liberalism. While cultural nationalists emphasized social reconstruction through cultural and economic movements, radical nationalists paid attention to the economic relationships that determine social and cultural structures. For radical nationalists, exploitation and colonization were structurally based. The national contradiction was identified with the class contradiction. The nationalist economic activity was a mask for Korean bourgeoisie's interests rather than as an aspect of Korean self-assertion. This argument was reinforced by the fact that the Korean capitalist class had to cooperate and even collaborate to a certain extent with the colonial state to keep their business.

While capitalist imperialism necessitated a certain degree of political centralization and economic integration of social structures, most peasants were converted into simple tenant farmers or workers, further intensifying their exploitation and deprivation. The working class and entrepreneurs had different perspectives and interests because of the structure of Japanese rule (Wells 1990: 139-42). Korean capitalists who prospered under colonialism lost much of their apparent zeal for independence. This multiplicity of class interests reflected the tensions between Korean capitalists, who claimed legitimacy on the basis of their contribution to economic development of the country, and farmers and workers who saw little improvement in their own situations. Under these conditions, communist activity grew in the form of an armed struggle in Manchuria, as well as growing domestically in the form of cooperation with the Korean Labor Federation. Popular aspirations became increasingly socialist in character. Such class contradictions aggravated factional differences within the nationalist movement, which was

supposed to reduce social differences.²⁰ Radical nationalists viewed the Korean masses (mainly rural peasant) as the core of the future nation and criticized the cultural nationalists for their elitist, apolitical and gradual stance. In the late 1920s, one of the significant organizations, *Singanhoe*, was split apart by the inability of its members to agree on their vision of Korean nation. The failure of the united front was the key reason for the left–right split and has dogged Korean nationalism ever since and shaped the Cold War hostility between North and South Korea (1988: 166).

To sum up, during the colonial period, Korean leaders were trying to replace the decaying props of Korea's old regime with a positive new vision of nation. Korean nationalism was originally based on emancipation and freedom from foreign rule, especially a reassertion of a national identity suppressed during the Japanese colonial period. All the Korean nationalists agreed with the idea that Korean nationhood had to be based on national independence. The cultural nationalists tried to cultivate national consciousness and embrace not only science and technology but also political values from the West, while waiting for the chance to act when Japan became weaker.

However, the Korean nationalists were split over political ideology: radical nationalists or socialists versus cultural nationalists that included Protestant self-reconstruction nationalists.²¹ Radical nationalists had little patience for the cultural nationalists' approach, and even less for Protestant nationalists, who advocated a resistance based on love, social consciousness and education. Under the colonial conditions of the economy and politics, class identity might contest with national identity when the intellectuals' moral leadership was undermined by their economic interests. In this sense, as Robinson points out, the cultural policy was a brilliant cooperative strategy useful for channeling nationalists' energy into safe directions (1988: 4).

The experience of Korean nationalism exemplifies the vulnerability of culture to Japanese manipulation. Divisions between Korea's nationalist ideologues helped the Japanese in their policy of divide and control. The colonial state responded with great effectiveness by allowing class conflict through a relaxing of the repression on the one hand and by treating the Korean nationalists group with discrimination on the other hand. Activists in different political movements became prominent during this period, only to be repressed as Japan turned its colonial policy to militarist anti-communism in the 1930s.

3. Nationalism and nation building

After liberation from the 35 years of Japanese rule at the end of the Second World War, Korea needed to rebuild a sovereign state and a national society within the newly founded state. However, no sooner had the nationalists seen their dream of an autonomous nation-state within their reach but they saw it snatched away again. The nation was divided by foreign powers and left both sides divided over how to cope with the drastic division of the country. Koreans struggled for unification but disagreed not only about tactics but also about the overall strategy and

end being sought. Under the Cold War geopolitical structure, South Korea found that the American 'liberators' only came to block the independence of Korea. To liquidate the existing social organizations, the Americans re-armed the Japanese to put down peaceful demonstrators calling for independence. This deprived the Koreans of any chance of reaching national consensus about unification. A sacrifice had to be made from the Korean side: the perpetuation of the division. Two states were established deriving their legitimacy from modernist motifs and themes, albeit articulated with very different political ideologies. Political cohesion required a mobilizational approach to push people into new activities demanded by the forces of modernization and nation building.

There were domestic and international dynamics at work during this period that reinforced the state-directed nation-building projects, and made great demands upon civil society. The newly independent Korean states had limited hegemony in re-articulating their rival versions of nationalism. It meant that before Korea had recovered from the injuries of social, political and economic oppression, and cultural uprooting from the Japanese colonial experience, the Korean nationalism had to adapt to the modernization project. In both the North and the South, the state became largely an initiator of economic development, rather than addressing itself to the creation of a civil society where social and cultural forces could participate in the political process. In the South Korean case, the ruling elites began to rely on authoritarian, even dictatorial, solutions to the problems of economic growth and modernization. They viewed the problem of economic development as one of creating a powerful centralized state, resting on an idea of nation. Positioning the state above and away from the society, the political elite in South Korea invented a new type of statism, which was quite different from the Western type of centralized states.

In the following decades, nationalism in South Korea underwent various changes in form and content. The military regime in post-colonial South Korea fostered a 'developmental nationalism' that promoted capitalist development and urbanization as a process of modernization. This 'developmental nationalism' drew its legitimation from anti-communism.²² The military elite utilized the nation as a vehicle for their political and material power, while reinforcing the self-identity of the nation through the simultaneous construction of an internal and external 'Other,' North Korea. In a social situation where human relations and values were in flux and the future was uncertain and insecure after the Korean War, a new modern nation-state was imperative to guarantee a sense of belonging. Nationalist expressions are situationally determined and their adherents are responsive to mobilization by expedient state policies. The more the nation-state penetrates into civil society, the more such a colonization of the structures of consciousness by the state deepens. Hence, we can see that the military and the bureaucracy depended not only on a monopoly of violence and finance, but also on the instrumental and symbolic functions of nationalism.

The post-colonial state in South Korea was a major agent of the economic transition from agrarian to industrial society. In the modernization process, 'development' and the 'modern state' were the strategic goals to which nationalism aspires.

Modernity and industrialism became the goals of nation building in states seeking to improve their material conditions. In the process, it was through the formation of national consciousness that new visions of society and economy were disseminated. The development of a constructive national identity was a significant constituting factor in modernization and state formation, in spite of its exclusive character. It was a real political force that was utilized to gain political power and achieve nationalist goals.

Nationalism remains the most powerful political ideology in modern South Korea, functioning as the primary force behind political and economic development. The state has been able to represent the normative order where the Confucian ethic was appealed to in order to shape modern social behavior. The state restructured itself in an authoritarian form to regulate/control the society. While the state brought changes in the social and economic spheres, social and economic interests continually infringed upon the political process. Politicians and state bureaucrats in power translated social, economic and military concerns into political concerns and successfully mobilized the rest of the population. However, as the state bureaucracy was consolidated and the capacity of the state for social intervention increased, the boundaries between the state and society collapsed, and the conflicts between 'legitimate' state politics and the activities of dissidents in social spheres grew increasingly intense.

Nationalism is not always produced by the state but also often exploited by different groups of people. It can also arise in opposition to a certain type of state. Popular interventions in social movements challenge the legitimacy and authority of state agencies and institutions. Thus popular movements against the state reshape the political arena and alter the state's strategies. As shown in Part II, social movements not only brought about institutional changes in society and the state, but also contributed to the process of state formation and nation building.

In this regard, it seems useful to discuss briefly the South Korean student movement as a typical expression of contemporary Korean nationalism. The student movement is one of the most influential manifestations of contemporary nationalism in South Korea. Contemporary South Korean student activism is characterized by complicated ideological formations, highly developed organizational tactics, and connections with other social groups (Choi 1991: 175). Despite its anarchist inclination, the nature of South Korea's student movement is nationalist. The student movement focused on democratization (abolition of military regime), autonomy (national liberation) and reunification. The immediate reasons for these peculiarities are to be found in Korea's historical heritage; namely colonial subjugation by Japan, the post-war division of the nation by foreign powers, and a military dictatorship (Crump 1996: 45–64).²³ Consequently, along with anarchism, the main ideological sources of the student movement have been anti-imperialism (anti-Americanism), Marxism and radical democracy.²⁴ Anti-American sentiments have been particularly strong in the nationalism of the modern South Korean student movement. This reflects a very important thread in Korean popular consciousness that sees American foreign policy responsible for the division of the nation.

In addition, the Kwangju incident in 1980 was a significant turning point in Korean student activism in terms of ideology, organization and practice. It challenged the legitimacy of the government as well as US policy in South Korea. In particular, US connivance in the Kwangju massacre (especially from the student activists' points of view) and Washington's support for the military dictatorship triggered violent anti-Americanism (Shin 1995). Anti-Americanism has functioned as a cry for recovering injured national pride and infringed sovereignty caused by unequal Korean-American relations. Anti-Americanism was manifested not only through violent political activities but also cultural ones. Increasing American trade pressure and the recent economic crisis strengthened Korean anti-Americanism in the late 1990s. Anti-Americanism is reinforced more by discontent with America's unilateralism, foreign policy, the bilateral security alliance and the presence of the United States Forces Korea (USFK). The images of the United States in South Korea are multiple, and fluctuate according to changing circumstances (Steinberg 2005).

At this juncture, we need to examine an interesting correlation between nationalism and democracy. Nationalism cannot function without incorporating some version of the democratic claim to legitimacy: if a state is not representative of its people, there will be no sense of loyalty to that nation.²⁵ On the other hand, the contradiction between democracy and nationalism is a real problem in theory as well as in practice: nationalism can and often does exist alongside the destruction of democratic institutions. In the South Korean case, nationalism and democratic movements reinforce each other, as both are essentially for self-determination. South Korea's experience suggests, therefore, that nationalism does not necessarily interrupt an evolution of democratic processes, but can indeed foster them.

South Korea is a case of 'bottom-up' democratization through mass mobilization and public protests in civil society. In the process of democratization, students and intelligentsia have played a crucial role as an *avant garde*. This has largely to do with the function of modern education that often portrays them as an embodiment of the critical conscience of society. The student movement in South Korea has tried to develop a *minjung* (mass or grass roots) level of activism for social change, and has especially focused on working with the labor movement (Koo 1996: 69–70). Here, the concept of *minjung* is used as a symbolic resource for the representation of national identity (Koo 1996; Wells 1995).²⁶

Since the mid-1980s, student groups, labor unions, religious organizations and the middle class have formed a pro-democracy coalition, posing a great challenge to the authoritarian regime. The role of civil society has gradually shifted from resistance to a repressive state, to representation of popular concerns and interests. The emergence of new social movements since the democratic opening in 1987 gave rise to a 'new politics' based on alternative conceptions of autonomy, identity and community, in which multiple and overlapping levels of authority and allegiance can be found.²⁷ Civil society made its political demands, using the nation as a legitimizing principle for social unity and social participation.

The state remains an autonomous and irreducible organization, but is also an arena of political competition. The nation is not only founded upon latent social

unity but is also a product of the increasing interaction between the state and civil society in a constantly changing environment. The sovereign state underwent structural transformations in response to the demands of civil society. In addition, increasing economic internationalism is accompanied by new demands for political sovereignty. Consequently, the politics of nationalism is shaped by the ongoing interplay among social forces, state structures and political ideologies, all of which are subject to social contestation.

The nation-building project is conditioned on the creation of effective and inclusive national symbols as well as economic and political conditions. It is in this sense that 'the nation has in fact become the body that legitimates the state' (Emerson 1962: 96). At the same time, however, nationalism can be used as a cultural and political means to challenge the legitimacy of the state. Corrigan and Sayer (1985) argue that state formation constitutes cultural revolution. It refers to multiple dimensions of the state formation process, including its construction of national identity and the structuring of society along gender, class, locality and ethnic lines. For Corrigan and Sayer, the power of the state rests more on the state's coercive and regulative institutions than on the consent of the people. However, cultural inscription is still important to consolidate the fragile hegemony of the state and to reinforce its hegemonic power in everyday experience. The hegemonic strategies of the state, either material or symbolic, produce the idea of the state. The strategies cement 'the imagined' into a lived experience through rituals, educational systems and state policies.

Considering this, we can understand how the Confucian idea of political order and stability continues to be important in modern South Korea, and why the central government is still considered to dominate over the nation, society and the national political economy. The close link between Confucian values, human relationships, social norms and cultural identity occupies a central position in South Korean attitudes towards politics and government. Confucian tradition remains Korea's cultural anchor, even though it has adapted itself to the changing conditions. Science and military power alone could not unite the people nor give any significant meaning to their lives. That can come from the moral virtue of Confucian tradition where the nation finds the preserved history and culture of the people. In this case, the state can be regarded as the political extension of the nation.²⁸ Confucian ethics still serve as the common national discourse of Korean identity. The nation and the state were substantialized through the tropes of blood and kinship and their hierarchical social relations were neutralized by means of morality and sentiment. The meaning of kinship terms has been extended and used to construct vertical relations of state and people.²⁹

4. Reunification and a new national identity

Given the division of the Korean nation, it seems appropriate to deal with Korean national identity in relation to reunification. North and South Koreans are not ashamed of being citizens of their respective countries. How then can they 'rejoice' in their Korean-ness and build up a 'shared sense of national identity?'

This calls for a high degree of historical self-awareness. It is difficult not to be ethnocentric in this process. At the same time, we should not underestimate the complexities of the sympathetic imagination. In the Korean case, Otherness is a political invention rather than a 'real' or practical difference. It is therefore possible to imagine (and hope for) North and South to summon up some sympathy for, rather than hatred and suspicion of, each other. This would necessitate their acknowledgement that both are victims of the legacy of the Cold War, and that the deep-rooted distrust and misunderstanding came from manipulations by both the regimes.

We cannot deny the possibility that the concept of 'nation' can also mislead. When we speak of patriotism and national feeling, the idea of bonds of solidarity is local, affective, particular and plural. While the principle of nationality fosters national differences around the globe, it enforces local uniformity within the nation. The same logic is applicable to the two Koreas. They barely tolerate each other, preoccupied as the two states are with legitimization struggles. Yet, they badly need each other to justify each one's *raison d'être*. Shin *et al.* (1999) point out the tension between ethnic and political identities in the nationalist politics after the division of the nation. The notion of nation as a political association conflicted with the notion of nation as a cultural community with a common history and sentiment. This incongruence between civic-territorial and ethno-cultural institutions of the nation has intensified the dynamic of intra-group criticism: that is, a strong expectation and pressure for conformity to standards of in-group homogeneity (Shin *et al.* 1999: 473–5). As a result, the 'politics of representation' between the two Korean states inflates the legitimization struggles.

The original image of 'nation' for Koreans is of an undivided nation. Both North and South Koreans renegotiated and articulated their identity in the processes of state formation and modernization. What we see is only a half-truth of the 'real' difference between the two systems: the structural differences in political and economic arrangements. The other fact is an illusion due to the lack of contacts and communication; what meets our eyes seems to be a reflection of their expectations, hatreds, resentments and frustrations about each other. If we want to free ourselves from this prejudice, and broaden liberal experience a little more, then we ought not to be overawed by a false imaginary of the Other.

In this context, Park (1984: 123–52) raises an important question: 'Have the two systems indeed developed separate political cultures that would make it virtually impractical to expect a comprehensive national integration?' Park explains the differences between the North and South Korean political systems by defining ideology as 'articulation of popular demands' and as an 'institution for legitimization.' Political ideologies have changed as popular demands have changed, and vice versa. The North Korean ideology has changed from Marxism–Leninism of its formative years, to socialist nationalism, and finally to a paternalistic nationalism, while South Korean ideology has evolved a precarious dualism of democratic idealism and pragmatic nationalism. As Park argues, the ideological difference stemmed from the different political experience and manipulation (through socialization and indoctrination) by the two regimes, rather than from

change in national character. The reinvention and narration of Korean national identity in terms of reunification utilize a politicization of collective memory for national discourse. National and state identities in a divided Korea seem to be conflicting, but cultural homogeneity can be an ideology conducive to a new unified state formation. This is one of the reasons why Koreans want to facilitate national integration by reference to their cultural homogeneity, which would supersede differences in political ideologies and government characteristics. Historical memories should be deconstructed to allow us to re-examine the consequences of those interpretations for the two Korea's national identities.

In a world of increasing consciousness of the significance of identity, nation-states are beginning to lose their grip as the cultural organizer. There exists a new dimension that goes beyond the control of national governments. This entails a displacement of sovereignty, giving way to a multilayered identity. The nation still constitutes a powerful imaginative community, but other identities are increasing their power (Hall 1997). In South Korea, the globalization of everyday life caused social dislocation with the imposition or transmission of alien and exotic cultures into the realm of metropolitan life. In this process, cultural identity can be disengaged from its local base. After Korea was forced to open up to foreign trade in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it took almost another century before it recovered its cultural and national confidence. Now new conditions of late modernity, often perceived as postmodern, make it difficult for the modern South Korean state to maintain a coherent identity in the face of a penetrative global capitalist culture. Koreans no longer need to hold to a singular identity or to be confined to its disgraceful colonial past. Increasingly polymorphic identities (sometimes even amorphous) are systematically de(re)constructed by the mass media and exposed to the micro-politics of domination. The coincidence of political, economic and cultural identities is becoming problematic in a highly differentiated society. This creates a crisis in governance that requires a new mode of identity, to reinforce the nation-state's capacity to govern.

If Koreans try to develop their national consciousness, does it then lead to tensions between the national desire for reunification and the forces of globalization? Is reunification still a valid option in the era of globalization where the formation of a global economy is taking place? It is worthwhile to note the fact that double standards are frequently the result of a clash between political and economic interests. Ironically, in the South Korean case, the government initiated the globalization campaign. South Korea needs to develop viable and prudent strategies to manage the challenge of globalization and to overcome its systemic vulnerability and structural dependency. Moreover, Korea needs large amounts of foreign capital to meet the costs of unification. How can Koreans achieve the long-cherished national goal of nation-state building – a united Korea – without either state losing its autonomy in setting economic policies? Hyun Ok Park (1998) argues that ethnic nationalism has changed from a territorially bound nationalism to a deterritorialized and hierarchical nationalism. The new dynamics of economic globalization and consequent changes in the role of the state have engendered a new form of nationalism. As Park shows, national unification

through intra-ethnic relationships, emotion-ridden nationalist sentiment and a tradition-bound mentality would not be effective in dealing with the challenges of globalization.³⁰ Although it becomes increasingly difficult to delimit a Korean identity in a global area, the importance of constructing an inclusive notion of Korean identity remains. New thinking is needed as a basis for a unified Korean national identity.

The possible reunification of Korea will require new organizing principles of identity in a new globalizing environment. The reunification discourse in Korea does not necessarily mean a return to the old paradigm of nation-state and nationalism. It is a part of state formation, which is an open-ended and ongoing process. Korea's reunification narrative should be dealt with in a broad context: it can eliminate national contradiction (i.e. the division of the nation) but also embrace the world in all its variety. To this end, Koreans have to be consciously careful not to go back to the narrow demand for nationalism, which is essentially based on ethnic homogeneity. A creative solution to the tension between universalistic values and particularistic nationalism needs to be found. Indeed the earlier Korean cultural nationalism may be able to provide us with some guidance.

The early Korean Protestant leaders were deeply involved in nationalist movements in the colonial period. They sought the moral renewal of the people as the essential condition for political unity and independence. They also tried to enlighten the people, realizing that the key to Korea's independence lay in developing the intellectual resources of the people and setting up schools. The significance of the role played by the Korean Protestant leaders in Korean nationalism is of course contestable. As Wells insightfully points out, however, 'the significance of the Protestant contribution to Korean nationalism lay in its creative "solution" of the tension between faith and nationalism, its refusal to define nationalism in terms of the "enemy," and its provision of a positive alternative' (Wells 1990: 19). And its lasting impact lies in a universalistic tendency; nationalism not based solely upon hatred of an enemy; and the 'sense of historic mission to unite Christianity and Korean nationality continued unabated to this day' (Wells 1990: 175). Wells recounts that the Protestant nationalists energized the reconstruction of a national culture through many organizations and movements by separating nation from state under colonial rule. Such cultural activism brought about criticism from radical or leftist nationalists. Korean Protestant nationalists, Wells argues, tended to fuse religion and culture, thus making a cultural nationalism ill-equipped to relate to the modern secular state with its claim to be the sole focus of nationality.

It is not my intention to explore the arguments between Korean nationalists in detail. What I want to emphasize here is that a society, in this case Korean society, has an instituting capacity on its own. It can solve the tension between the universal and the particular through a creative invention of nationhood and national identity, as we have seen, in such examples as cultural nationalism (e.g. Korean Protestant nationalism, Tonghak or Chondogyo movements and the *minjung* movement). The reunification process is one of the main unfinished projects of state formation where the creativity of Korean society as an instituted

society manifests its 'institutioning social imaginary significations' (Castoriadis 1987). Reunification, in this sense, is a self-alteration process of Korean society, a process in which the radical imaginary creates new types of social–historical entities. Reunification calls for deconstruction of the existing institution(s) of society. Although it becomes increasingly difficult to delimit a Korea identity in a global area, the importance of constructing an inclusive notion of Korean identity remains. Globalization provides a new framework for communication and understanding between intercivilizational encounters, in which a new national imagery and institutional mechanism can emerge.

9 Reunification as a radical project of state formation

The two Koreas have taken different roads to modernization. Although both Koreas gave priority to economic development as a means of achieving legitimacy, their social institutions and political ideologies have developed along different trajectories. The hegemonic struggles of the two Korean regimes over divided nationhood make it difficult to envisage reunification in the near future. However, the new reunification discourse brings the reunification agenda back to the forefront of the state formation project and reopens the question of Korean civilization and culture.

Reunification entails the construction, for the first time, of Korea as a unitary modern state.¹ The question of reunification should be treated as part of the incomplete modern process of state formation, rather than external or additional to Korean modernization. The question is also essential to the formation of a modern national identity, to the construction of a more balanced relationship between state and society, and to a new framework for visions of future economic development. In this concluding chapter, I will discuss the prospects for reunification.

1. The unfinished project of state formation

Many Koreans view the building of an independent and strong nation-state to be a historical mission. This tacit consensus is expressed in what I call a 'normative reunification discourse': Koreans should be united, because they are geographically, culturally and ethnically the same. This strong motivation towards reunification is driven partly by the very fact of the national division: the separation was imposed by foreign powers and nationalism remains a potent force in Korea. This in turn led to the belief that only through reunification could Koreans solve the national problems. The political regimes in the North and the South have appealed to this normative unification discourse to rationalize their own political projects and power bases (Yang 1994).²

On the face of it, economically more powerful South Korea seems to be in an advantageous position with respect to any possible reunification scenario. As one top official in the Kim Young Sam government proclaimed, the recent defections from North Korea, including that of a high-ranking government official, could mean that 'somehow the competition between the two Koreas has come to victory for South Korea, in terms of economy, ideology and morality.' Despite such optimism based

on its greater economic prosperity in the South, the deteriorating economic conditions in the North did not directly translate into destabilization of the regime. The prospect of an economically and socially devastating flood of refugees from the North in the event of war, or even in the event of peaceful reunification, has tempered the enthusiasm in the South for opening up the reunification dialog.

Both South and North Korea have certain weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The weakness of South Korea is unbalanced development between an industrially powerful economy and weak ineffective political institutions. Despite the fact that an invigorated civil society has influenced the development of social governance institutions and participated in political reform, the society became increasingly bipolarized with the economic slowdown. The weakness of North Korea is a crumbling economy and a rigid political leadership that has never abandoned its so-called 'revolutionary liberation' tactics towards the South, regardless of the changes that have occurred in other Stalinist states. These weaknesses, combined with the lack of meaningful dialog between the two states, makes unification in the short or medium term very unlikely, notwithstanding the possibility of a sudden collapse of the North's regime or the outbreak of war. In the short term, a more pragmatic scenario is that both regimes proceed with low levels of cooperation and cultural exchanges.

The prospects of Korea unification are uncertain largely because of the nature of the North Korean regime and its leadership. North Korea started from a situation of double dependence: the Soviet Union helped set the regime up in the first place, and China helped it to survive the Korean War. Nevertheless, the North Korean regime was able to extricate itself from dependence on, and undue influence from, both of its hitherto superpower allies, and was hence able to develop a relatively autonomous strategy of economic development and foreign policy.

From the mid-1950s until the mid-1960s, North Korea put into practice one of the more effective versions of the Soviet economic model, and economically it appeared to outperform the South.³ The North Korean government, basking in its relative economic successes and armed with the ideology of anti-colonialism, secured a high degree of legitimacy for itself. It was only with the social consequences of economic decline as a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union that its legitimacy was increasingly called into question, and a legitimization crisis ensued.

The regime gradually deviated from the orthodox Marxist–Leninist ideology, towards a more openly voluntarist doctrine (it did so in a more sustained fashion than China). This was of course closely linked to the elevation of the leader above the party. The North Korean emphasis on national self was connected with the leader cult – 'Kim Il Sungism.' This personality cult can be viewed as both the consequence and cause of state centralization. It was the consequence insofar as the state centralization entailed a bureaucratically planned economy with a monopolization of political power and had the tendency, as already shown in Stalin's USSR and Mao's China, for political power to shift from the broader institutions of the state to the narrower platform of party and then to the party leader. This concentration of power in turn reinforced state centralization and bureaucratism. The Korean Workers Party, led and largely directed by Kim Il Sung, monopolized state power, promoted an autarchic nationalism and focused on military preparations.

The regime has, somewhat paradoxically, ended up rather like the ultra-nationalist Japan of the 1930s: a dynastic state that has incorporated a mythical founding father into its ideology. Dynastic power was perpetuated through the cult of personality, familism and supreme leadership. These ideological appendages were and are bolstered by a diffused network surveillance, which has enabled the North Korean state to more effectively control its population than perhaps any other totalitarian regime. The differences from the other supposedly more advanced communist states are very interesting for comparative purposes.

After the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the USSR, we witnessed the paradox of communist regimes in the Third World – principally North Korea, Cuba and China – continuing to survive, albeit with significant difficulties. This is despite greater levels of external pressure and opposition to these regimes.⁴ North Korea, among those states formally ruled by communist parties, was at first occupied by the Soviet army. With the withdrawal of Soviet occupying forces, North Korea became relatively independent of the Soviet influence. During the Korean War, North Korea was able to secure the material and military support of the Soviets and China, while still maintaining its relative independence. After the war, but at an accelerated rate since the mid-1960s, North Korea became increasingly isolationist; it refused to participate in the international division of labor, and hence encountered increasing economic difficulties. This isolation has, unlike elsewhere in the former communist states, facilitated the strengthening of the political regime, but at the cost of chronic economic and social crises. As a result, we cannot entirely disregard the possibility that the existing regime will be toppled.

When we compare two divided nations – Germany and Korea – the main differences in social change and unification dynamics become clear. In both cases, the division of the nation was a byproduct of the Cold War. However, they have different historical circumstances.⁵ Germany never developed intra-national antagonisms to the extent that Korea did. As Cumings points out, it is impossible to understand the outbreak of full-scale war on the Korean peninsula without an examination of the constant jockeying for position between North and South Korea from at least 1948, perhaps even as early as 1945 (Cumings 1981).⁶

With regard to the state–society relations in Germany and Korea, we can note also some important differences with respect to dependence and autonomy. Although the North Korean and East German regimes have (had) powerful coercive capacities, they show differences in terms of degree and intensity. East Germany gave some breathing space to its civil society, allowing the inflow of information and contacts, whereas North Korea consolidated an Orwellian society with severe repression of its civil society (Bleiker *et al.* 1994: 105). The degree of economic and political stability in South Korea and West Germany is also different. Despite South Korea having achieved dramatic economic growth, its capacity to take over another crippled economy is far less than was West Germany's. Moreover, the recent financial crisis in East Asia has weakened the South Korean economy. Under these circumstances, the German model of reunification does not seem possible or desirable for the Koreans. Finally, South Korea's democracy has yet to

be consolidated to create a workable coalition of all different social forces to form a (re)unified nation acceptable to the North as well as to the South. Given these considerations, it seems more constructive and reasonable to shift the focus from violent and volatile absorption of one state by the other to a peaceful and sustainable unification.⁷ When the two regimes become more comparable and compatible, it will be easier for them to negotiate without the fear of being absorbed and losing sovereignty.

In North Korea, opposition that had been built on popular grievances stemming from economic decline has not succeeded in eroding decades of nationalism and isolationist 'self-reliance' ideology. Operating under far less favorable economic conditions than those of his father's years, Kim Jung Il has been able to maintain the Communist Party and its privileged position almost intact. However, he has to cooperate and make concessions to both political and military officials in order to maintain his own position within the party. Overall then, despite the pervasive failure of its economic sector, the Stalinist North Korean regime exhibits the persistence of the communist apparatus as a distinct socio-political entity.

Noland (1997) argues that North Korea will muddle through, making *ad hoc* adjustments as circumstances dictate rather than adopting radical economic reform, or do nothing, leaving the present crisis as it is. The reasons he presents are as follows. First, even though North Korea has been showing serious economic deterioration since the late 1970s, and even though the recent floods worsened its food situation to the verge of a catastrophic national famine, Kim Jung Il's regime appears to have been largely successful in fusing *juche* ideology to the party's institutional monopoly on the rhetoric of its nationalism (Noland 1997: 106). This is partly because North Korea has no institutions capable of channeling mass discontent into effective political action. There exists no civil society to hold the party in check.⁸ The regime is still strong enough to prevent the people from mass movement and the political elite from any attempt at a *coup d'état*. Hence, the central government seems to manage a high degree of coherence in its policies, and to induce the people's acquiescence, relying on the extremely powerful social control mechanisms.

Economic crisis may not necessarily lead to political chaos. China in the early 1960s and Cuba even today are good examples of this. Noland predicts that North Korea will most likely follow Romania's example (1997: 115–17). The experience of Romania suggests that North Korea may muddle through for years before turning towards reform or chaos, especially if external powers find this solution to be in their interests. We can find some similarities between North Korea and Romania: the lowest living standards among communist countries; the most repressive political system; almost an entire absence of rival political forces of any strength; and an ideology closer to fascism than to the 'orthodox' communist regimes (Sampson 1989: 217–24). Similar economic and even political developments could be expected in North Korea if the economic situation turns from bad to hopeless and if everyone turns against Kim Jung Il.

Like Romania, the state in North Korea is the dominant force in the economy. Political power is used to create and allocate profits that are channeled to politically

influential groups and individuals, either openly or through corruption. Unlike Romania's Ceausescu, however, Kim Jung Il could well adopt similar policies to deal with economic hardship while maintaining the regime's political base.⁹ These favored constituencies would presumably be the Kim clique, the military, and possibly the upper echelons of the Korean Workers Party. North Korea could also play the nuclear weapon card to exert leverage on external powers and even get more food support from other countries including South Korea, the United States and Japan, even though that would be a high-risk strategy. These factors mean North Korea has more chances of muddling through than did Romania.

South Korea wants neither an abrupt collapse nor a prolonged status quo in North Korea. From South Korea's perspective, the costs of unification, particularly under the present conditions of economic decline and uncertainty, seem to be unmanageable. According to one estimate, it could run as high as US \$1 trillion over 10 to 25 years (Noland 1997: 114). Moreover, the enormous expected migration from the north to the south could bring about social tensions and instability. From North Korea's perspective, a muddling through is also the safest choice. North Korea's leaders have shown themselves to be brilliant at political maneuvering but quite incapable of anticipating or alleviating economic crisis. The dilemma facing North Korea's leaders today is how to reform the economic system without losing political control.

Reform in North Korea will not necessarily guarantee that it will move to a market economy. As we have witnessed in the case of China, the discarding of socialist inspirations and ultimate goals does not mean the automatic embracing of a market economy. Despite significant reforms, China certainly does not yet have a fully functioning market economy in the conventional definition of the term. In North Korea, advocacy of 'the market' is completely incompatible with the founding *juche* (self-reliance) ideology. Whether North Korea undertakes gradual or rapid reform, it cannot avoid ideological challenges once it opens its country to the world. Therefore, maintaining the status quo is very attractive to the North Korean elite.

However, maintaining the status quo is also very risky if a solution to the economic problems cannot be found. Economic rationality and efficiency have been sacrificed to political imperatives in North Korea for decades. As a result, it is entirely naive to assume that North Korea will turn towards a market economy without generating tremendous social trauma.

In the north, as in South Korea, political ideology is the ultimate framework for economic development; hence, economic failure would considerably undermine the power of the political elite. We can expect no coherence or rationality in North Korea's coming course of development, because it must largely follow a politically motivated transformation as opposed to an informed economically rational one. Through muddling, North Korea can earn some time to adjust itself to critical situations, for better or for worse. No one can imagine what kind of a hybrid North Korea can build. This makes the future of North Korea an open-ended question, leaving our predictions at the mercy of the contingency of history.

2. Korea's reunification: so close yet so far?

As touched upon above, the economic problems in North Korea are a central issue in relation to reunification. South Korea's position in this is largely determined by the attitude of the North Korean state to the south. South Koreans are seeing different pictures of North Korea: starving people on the one hand, military parades and threatening missiles on the other. These contradicting images cause confusion and divisions among South Koreans about whether (and to what extent) they should try to help the north. Those who are hard-liners or conservatives oppose giving any aid to North Korea, arguing that much of it is likely to end up going to the military. They claim that not only is North Korea not doing enough to reform agriculture, but also that aid will just help Kim Jung Il and the members of his regime to sustain their hold on power. According to this view, Pyongyang is blackmailing other countries for economic assistance.

By contrast, those who are moderates or humanitarians urge the provision of aid to North Korea. They justify their position by arguing that it is ordinary North Korean people who are suffering the most from the economic difficulties, and hence they should be provided with assistance. They suggest that further deterioration of the North Korean economy could result in a highly volatile and uncontrollable situation. The possibility of a military provocation from the north, or even a disorderly political collapse of the regime, could create a power vacuum and cause further deterioration of the North Korean economy. Such scenarios could well result in millions of refugees seeking food and a livelihood in South Korea. In addition, aid will hasten political and economic change in North Korea for a 'soft landing.' Although many South Koreans are reluctant to pay the tremendous costs associated with reunification, most economists argue that to establish ties with the north is important for the south if it is to be more economically competitive in the long run.

Han suggests five possible scenarios for the Korean peninsula: soft landing; crash landing through limited warfare or all-out war; internal collapse in Pyongyang; maintenance of the status quo for a relatively long period of time, while improving inter-Korean relations to a limited degree; and finally, the achievement of a breakthrough in inter-Korean relations in which substantial progress is made towards unification (1997: 27–38). I want to discuss here two of these scenarios (a soft landing or rapid unification) in more detail, and the policy options for these scenarios, since these two best illustrate the current situation in the Korean peninsula. The so-called 'soft-landing' policy is based on peaceful, gradual change in North Korea. This is a preferred diplomatic strategy in Seoul and Washington. In opposition to this is the 'hastening' policy supported by Nicholas Eberstadt, a researcher connected with the American Enterprise Institute and Harvard University.

Harrison (1997), favoring the soft-landing policy, proposes the survival of North Korea, with a plan for reintegration over a period of several decades while the north reforms its political and economic system. In order to achieve this end, he argues for an adequate level of economic aid, replacing the armistice with a

peace treaty, a gradual reduction and withdrawal of US forces in the south, and the removal of US economic sanctions. In contrast, Eberstadt (1997) proposes rapid progress and argues that the 'prevailing consensus' is nothing but a fantasy. According to him, 'as time goes on, North Korea only grows economically poorer, and militarily more dangerous. For all parties affected, from the peoples of Northeast Asia to the powers of NATO, the faster reunification takes place, the better' (Eberstadt 1997: 79). He goes further to claim that the north's political and economic backwardness and the south's economic dynamism mean that both the relative and the absolute chasm between the per-capita incomes of each country will continue to widen so that the cost to the South of unification will grow steadily. Moreover, a continuing division of Korea invites a competitive proliferation of nuclear weapons in Northeast Asia, and also encourages Japan to opt for nuclear defense. He cogently emphasizes the benefits that rapid reunification would bring not only to the south but also to the region, and urges the south to begin to think about reconciliation. What Eberstadt does not consider, however, is how South Korea might cope with the expected wave of refugees from the north, the attendant social and cultural problems, and the vast drain on the economy.

Foster-Carter (1992) presents an optimistic view of the rapid reunification scenario, with similar nuances to Eberstadt's view. He argues that given the north's negative growth, political uncertainties and international isolation, Seoul should discard any expectation of a gradual unification and brace itself for a sudden collapse and absorption of the north in the near future. Foster-Carter is prudent in mentioning the costs of reunification. According to him, the cost per annum of this absorption will be in the order of \$15–26 billion in government investment and subsidies, and over \$35 billion in private sector funds over ten years (Foster-Carter 1992: 99). He suggests that South Korea can manage this through foreign loans and direct investment, particularly from Japan; domestic revenues generated from peace dividends and reunification taxes; and in the long term, increased productivity from the integration of southern technology and low-cost northern labor (1992: 99–101). Finally, he argues that a united Korea will not only become a central economic power but also exercise a powerful 'armed neutrality' in the region (1992: 115).

Such an optimistic prognosis of Korean reunification, however, does not imply that the actual integration of the two systems will be without difficulty. Foster-Carter does not lose sight of the bigger picture. For example, he correctly notes that the government will incur huge debts in redeveloping the north's antiquated infrastructure and inefficient energy sources. Foster-Carter predicts severe transitional unemployment, as agriculture, steel and chemical industries in the north are exposed by competition as being hopelessly uncompetitive (1992: 43–4, 101, 110).

There are some problems in Foster-Carter's thesis. First, his hypothesis on Korea's reunification, absorption of the north by the south, is based on a conventional paradigm of modernization theory. His framework does not say enough about the specific patterns of both Koreas' modernization processes, or the distinctiveness of the historical experiences of each country. What he missed, as did most people at the time, was the vulnerability of the South Korean economic

and political structure, despite its relative economic prosperity and political democratization, and the unusual ideological consolidation and national consensus of North Korea in spite of its economic crisis.

Second, Foster-Carter envisages a complete overhauling of the economy along capitalist lines in North Korea, implying that attempts at reforming the previous social system are unacceptable and perhaps even impossible. What is needed here is special attention to public perception of the transition process. For more than half a century, the North Korean people, without any contact with the outside world, have been told that capitalism is a deformed, ineffective and unequal economic system. They have to be acquainted with the advantages of capitalism as soon as they are absorbed into the south. In this context, Foster-Carter seems too optimistic about capitalism as a system, and about the capacity of North Korean society to adapt to the new system. As Grinker (2000) has shown in the experiences of North Korean defectors living in the south, the social and cultural costs of reunification will far exceed the economic costs from both sides. Reunification means a transition full of conflicts and contradictions for both Koreas. It needs more time to minimize the social and psychological costs for both Koreas.

Finally, Foster-Carter's prediction of a 'neutral' united Korea in East Asia discounts economic and strategic realities. A united Korea, still strongly suspicious of communism, will share an 800-mile border with militarily burgeoning communist China. From China's perspective, this new border also presents the prospects of another non-compliant neighbor on its southern flank. These factors are bound to raise security concerns for both Seoul and Beijing. In the economic arena, the recent euphoria over Sino-Korean trade relations may increasingly be replaced by more sobering concerns about the Chinese economic threat. The United States and Japan have the same interests in this matter: both countries do not want China to become a world economic power accompanied by its ever-expanding military capabilities. This will strongly influence the progress and outcomes of reunification.

There has been a continuing effort to maintain and improve the channels of communication between the north and south. So far, the north-south contact has taken place mainly at the government level and these contacts have been sporadic and politically motivated. For various political and security reasons, the public, from both sides, has been excluded from the process of mutual contact. The historic inter-Korean summit meeting in Pyongyang in 2000 provided momentum for the development of inter-Korean talks for reunification. Following the summit meeting there have been a host of conciliatory events, such as ministerial talks, Red Cross talks, the reunion of separated families on National Liberation Day, the reopening of liaison offices in Panmunjeom and the reconnection of railways between the two Koreas. Such activities can be instrumental in untangling many complex issues and resolving differences. However, the windows through which North Korea can be seen, explained and understood are extremely narrow and colored by ideology. As Suh points out, North Korean studies in South Korea and abroad (mostly dominated by political scientists and policy-makers) suffer from

serious theoretical, ideological and methodological biases and fail to provide any insightful analysis of dualistic features of social change in North Korea – that is, ‘a widening gap between North Korean society as envisioned by the ruling group and the reality as seen from the bottom up’ (Suh 1998).

Bleiker, Bond and Lee try to expand and refine the hypothesis about the constructive potential of ‘influences from below,’ on the question of democratization and unification in Korea (1994: 103). On the basis of the non-violent direct-action model, they suggest an integrative rapprochement and promotion of ideological tolerance between ‘inherently antagonistic exclusivity-seeking’ regimes (1994: 104). For this purpose, the Korean public has to participate in the formation and realization of unification policies. This is what we can call a transition from ‘normal’ government politics to direct people’s political action; that is, ‘the promotion of interests outside of or independent of established channels of institutionalized politics’ (1994: 104).

Given the type of division in Korea, there is no simple way of bringing about a single state structure overnight. It is noteworthy that the North Korean government has indicated that its unification plan is for establishing a Confederal Republic, which would be labeled Confederal Republic of Koryo.¹⁰ In September 1989, the South Korean government offered its own unification formula, called the National Community Unification Plan. Both plans seem to place a steadily escalating emphasis on community building and are willing to accept a long period of coexistence for the two different systems on the Korean peninsula. However, they illustrate that North Korea prefers one state and one nation while maintaining the division of two systems, whereas South Korea seems to want two states and one nation.¹¹

The difference in approaches to reunification poses another question: what is the basis and process by which North and South Korea can negotiate and compromise to make one Korea? National reunification does not directly imply either state unification and/or system unification. On this issue, Galtung provided an insightful suggestion long ago, and some of his points deserve comment here. His general approach was based on the framework of ‘one-nation/one-state/two-systems.’ Galtung suggested a multidimensional, multi-staged (levels or phrases), egalitarian and gradual progression of unification policies, which he regarded as the only realistic, flexible and pluralistic approach. In this process, there are many levels (stages) – from general to specific to super-structural – where the two states gradually merge into one, allowing the two systems to coexist in peaceful competition (1972: 346–52). According to his description, this is a process of ever-increasing positive interaction between the two states, such as exchange and cooperation (1972: 357–8). The other point is the significance of the involvement of large segments of the total population to develop a sense of national consciousness in the Korean people. Without the people’s participation and consensus on the reunification issue, unification is likely to be mere rhetoric.

As well as exogenous and endogenous economic and political processes affecting reunification, the construction of a democratic national culture in Korea can be another aspect. For the last five decades, north and south have gone through

different experiences and social trajectories. Through the period, ideology has been the main force perpetuating division. The two ideologies function as the 'symbolic instrument for the establishment of power-holders and revolutionary power-seekers' (Yang 1994: 167). In Korea, political ideologies are rigidly opposed and the struggle is for the highest possible stakes: the very lives of the ruling elite on both sides. The different ideologies have set up a fierce competition for legitimacy through the competing systems of education and economic development, enforced by the kind of political repression that undermines legitimacy.

The antagonism between north and south had roots in economic and military competition. Military elites exerted maximum political influence to maintain a highly centralized regime for the sake of political stability and economic growth. Channels of communication have been closed or are only one-way. Superior officers have imposed their will and their ideas on their subordinates, so that order and obedience have replaced discussion and argument. Korean leaders from both sides have put their efforts into the legitimization and institutionalization of this division.

In South Korea, an undemocratic regime has neglected the common interests of a divided nation. National security has been only one of the authoritarian government's excuses for repressing civil society. The nightmarish rhetoric was too real for the war generations to look beyond the hidden agenda of the military government: the post-war status quo. The hegemonic power was too strong for the post-war generations to effectively challenge it. Although democratization in South Korea has yet to exorcise the odious practice of misinformation, in which its security organizations have routinely engaged, the involvement of the ordinary people in demonstrations posed a radical or revolutionary threat to the system. Bleiker and others are right when they emphasize the significance of mass-based non-violent struggle and say that 'this is particularly relevant to hierarchically ordered society such as Korea, where any hint of change in the system portends the breakdown of the entire social order and is likely to be repressed at all costs' (1994: 108).

Now South Koreans have changed their regime from military to civilian, and democracy has taken hold over the years. We can therefore reasonably expect involvement of the public in the government's reunification policies. This means that alternative unification policies can have a realistic chance of emerging out of national consensus and with the informed support of the public.

Reunification requires a new vision of an autonomous society. As Habermas (1996a) asserts, democracy, a strong economy, a superior welfare system and reformative socialization towards unification are the important factors for progressive development of the unification movement. Among these factors, democracy is central because it provides favorable circumstances for development of the unification movement. The normative and materialist conditions for democratic institution building need to be further developed. Here the integration process involves state formation through creation of a new, relatively open political system.

An ultimate political challenge the South Korean state faces today is how to build a genuine democratic relationship between the state and the public.

Without reconstructing the state on the basis of genuine federalism and decentralization, ideological contentions will erode the legitimacy of the nation-state and reduce its capacity for continual economic development in a reunified Korea. A different form of political arrangement is necessary for a reunified Korean society if it is to survive and function effectively in the modern world. If the two hostile states 'have to' choose integration to survive, they cannot remain as they used to be; they can survive only in a transformed form, whether it be as a loose confederation or a coexistence of different systems.¹²

Any reunification agenda today demands a close integration of peoples and a shared culture as well as a political body. For a successful integration, the two sides need to develop a strategic framework to deepen areas of common interest and to resolve longstanding hostility. The problem of 'identity concerns' is, however, essentially socio-cultural. This means that reunification, above all, can be identity-driven rather than politically or security-driven. This does not necessarily have to rely on a narrow ethnic nationalism. In the age of international coexistence and cooperation, reunification can be achieved without jeopardizing either the universalist idea of a global society or particularist demands of national identity. Thus, the stability of the reunification project hinges on the mechanism of integration that shapes a new identity for all Koreans.

3. Geopolitical variations: impediment or support?

Korea demonstrates the detrimental impact of the bipolar world order (Gallicchio 1988; Foot 1990). Conflict and civil war in Korea have reflected a lack of policy coordination among the allied powers. Nevertheless, it was the unique geopolitical features of the Korean War that made it more than simply a local disturbance in some distant Asian land. It was a focal point of the Cold War conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union and their allies. Due to these geopolitical features, the armistice negotiations were not straightforward but 'one of the most difficult bargaining processes of the Cold War period' (Foot 1990: 1).

The two sides of Korea technically are still at war: the border is one of the most heavily militarized areas in the world with a million North Korean troops facing about 887,000 South Korean and American troops.¹³ The process of post-war settlement after the Second World War is not yet complete: there are a myriad of unsettled border disputes, ethnic and subnational conflicts, regional tension and conflicts. The Korean peninsula, in a geopolitical sense, is a highly strategic point where the interests of the neighboring countries – China, Russia, the United States and Japan – have continuously converged. On this point, Leatherdale provides valuable insight. He writes:

Korea's principal misfortune is to possess the least enviable of geopolitical locations, a small country surrounded by water and enemies. She dangles from the vast Asian landmass like an appendix – a conduit for Japanese ambitions in Asia and the spread of Chinese culture to Japan. Korea is the

historical battleground for East Asia's dominant continental and maritime powers.

(1994: 151)

Against this background is another key issue. Do the big powers want to see a united Korea? Does reunification serve their interests in the region? There is general agreement among scholars that the East Asian countries are keen to maintain a stable and peaceful environment in order to pursue economic development.¹⁴ However, there are also potential threats to security. East Asia is showing some signs of regional concert, but elements of the hegemonic and balance-of-power cold-war system remain.

With the end of the Cold War, regional security concerns have become more fluid and complex. There are some signs of tension including an accelerating arms race; territorial disputes such as the Russian–Japanese conflict over the Kurile Islands and Chinese–Vietnamese disagreements about the Spratleys; and the underdevelopment of multilateral mechanisms. While regional and global interdependency has become inevitable, bilateralism remains the prime reality of East Asian international relations.¹⁵ It is especially true for North Korea that nationalism and bilateralism, not regionalism or globalism, function as the *lingua franca* of Pyongyang's international stance.¹⁶

Korea has entered a new phase of reunification in a very different world today. There have been undeniable trends of depolarization in the global power system following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the subsequent reunification of Germany, and the demise of communism in Eastern Europe.¹⁷ The recent rapid changes and economic instability in both North Korea and South Korea call for a rethinking of reunification strategies. Given its geopolitical significance, Korean reunification will not be dealt with exclusively as a national problem between the two Koreas. It is also dependent upon the support of the external powers that have vested security interests in the peninsula.

Regional power relations are complex and unstable. Although unprecedented opportunities to establish the foundations for a peaceful world have arisen, tension on the Korean peninsula remains high as the vestiges of the Cold War era rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union linger on (Martin 1990: 13–28). Kihl, in a similar vein, sees the coming era as one of volatility and regional conflict, with the United States leading a 'diffused' new world order (1994: 1–13). Despite rapid changes in global politics and security, the Asian security environment is slow to change. Obstacles to change include an absence of clearly delineated security boundaries, with no NATO or Warsaw Treaty Organization-like collective-security bodies, and the dominance of bilateral over multilateral approaches to security cooperation and alliance relations (Scalapino 1988). The pattern of security relations in the Asia-Pacific region is fragmented and primarily bilateral in nature. Subregional variation and heterogeneity are thus the characteristics of the Asia-Pacific security environment. To foster a region-wide consensus and security cooperation, confidence-building measures and tension reduction in subregions are needed. This is an optimal time for the

Koreans to ponder on how the new Asian order will be shaped in the region and what would be the best strategy for Korean reunification within the new regional order.

Scholars differ as to the role of external powers on the Korean peninsula regarding either détente or reunification. On one side of this debate are those who view external interference on the peninsula as detrimental and obstructionist; while the other side argues that only with great-power cooperation in a framework such as the 'two-plus-four' (i.e. the two Koreas and the United States, Russia, China and Japan) can stability and unification be achieved (Lee, J. 1996). Strategically situated as it is, the Korean peninsula will continue to influence and be influenced by events in East Asia. Korean unification will disrupt the regional status quo, and any such disruption is likely to be resisted at some level by the regional powers.

The United States, China, Japan and Russia want to see an inward-looking North Korea rather than a capitalist but possibly nuclear-armed unified state on the peninsula. China, Russia and Japan may prefer continued economic engagement with South Korea, and be willing to spend some resources on maintaining North Korea as a buffer state. If neighboring countries are to keep their influence on the peninsula, they would wish to constrain other states competing for hegemonic dominance in the region. Diplomatic relations, both bilateral and multilateral, among the states with major stakes in the security of Northeast Asia greatly complicate the problem. The United States, China, Japan and Russia want to normalize or improve their relationships with both Koreas. North Korea wants to exploit the relationships between the big powers and South Korea, while the big powers pursue essentially conflicting interests in the peninsula. This reflects their preference for the status quo rather than unification.

Korean reunification is therefore connected with the security interests of these four major powers. Viewed in this light, it becomes clear that a workable reunification formula must include procedures and outcomes that can be not only beneficial and fair to the two Koreas but also acceptable to the four powers. Focusing on the peculiar geographical location of the Korean peninsula, Hwang stresses the usefulness of neutralization for all parties concerned and sees this as a win-win game (1990, 1991). Under permanent neutrality, Hwang claims, 'each Korea could negotiate its re-association without fear of being eaten by the other, and the four powers could disengage themselves from the peninsula without fear that the balance of power in the region was being tipped against any of them' (1991: 516). He urges the United States to take the initiative by removing its troops and seeking Russia, China and Japan to participate in guaranteeing a neutralized Korea (Hwang 1990: 96). Given the difficulty of negotiation between the two Korean states, neutralization could provide a safety net to induce mutual adjustment and agreement for a peaceful reunification.

Despite the seeming sobriety and fairness of these arguments, however, neutrality will be meaningless unless an international treaty guarantees it. Korea alone cannot create permanent neutrality for itself. It is not clear whether the major powers would like this idea. However, before 'neutralization' of the Korean

peninsula can be established, the two Koreas would have to build trust and confidence if they want to talk seriously about the neutrality principle.

4. A rapprochement: slow but steady

It is still difficult to foretell the prospects for reunification; that is, when and how it will happen. Simon and Calder draw attention to the complexity of regional development in an infinitely competitive world system (Simon 1993; Calder 1996).¹⁸ In the region, old rivalries over disputed territories and divided countries overlap with new striving for economic gains. China's continued economic and military growth causes concern.

Among the problems and tensions in the region, North Korea's intentions with regard to both its nuclear program and its foreign policy need to be closely observed. The mainstream view in this debate holds that the north's foreign policy is aimed at winning a military confrontation on the peninsula, and nuclear weapons will be one component of that. Andrew Mack (1993) writes of North Korea's desire for nuclear weapons and its intentions and capabilities for launching an offensive operation. While most observers have assumed that North Korea is using nuclear weapons as a bargaining chip to gain economic or diplomatic concessions, Mack argues that North Korea may see 'nuclear weapons not as a "card" to be bargained away, but as a "strategic asset" that must be maintained at almost any cost' (1993: 9). As Song interprets, however, North Korea's motives for nuclear development may be both a strategic need and an economic bargaining chip (Song 1991: 63–4). Bracken is on the same ground with Song in this regard. For Bracken, the most basic fact of the security situation on the Korean peninsula is that the competition between north and south is a zero-sum game: North Korea has decided that having the bomb will buy it some time, postponing the inevitable (Bracken 1993: 92).

North Korea has an astonishing bargaining power with its suspected atomic bomb project. Through intense diplomatic negotiations, Pyongyang has achieved leverage and recognition that it has long sought in the international community. Mazarr (1995) characterizes the North Korean strategy as one of ambiguity – trying to maximize leverage by not revealing its hand and by keeping alive suspicions and fears in the minds of its adversaries.¹⁹ He convincingly argues that North Korea's pragmatic adjustment to US policy was instrumental in inducing the 'Agreed Framework' in October 1994.

In connection with North Korea's nuclear strategy, most people tend to overlook South Korea's motivations behind its nuclear weapons programs in the rush to condemn North Korea for seeking nuclear weapons. What we have to remind ourselves is that South Korea, too, has a nuclear potential. An outcome that no nation would like to see is a nuclear-armed north and south, which would lead to the worst scenario in the region: a nuclear-armed Japan (Kim and Olsen 1996: 61). South Korea is vulnerable to the threat of attack from the north. No peace treaty exists, only an armistice agreement.²⁰ Kyongsoo Lho is convincing in his argument that North Korea, while still a formidable military adversary, is no

longer capable of launching an invasion. Lho writes: 'relatively low levels of combat readiness and the poor maintenance of most equipment and material in general undermine the real capabilities of Pyongyang's military machine' (1993: 151).

How then can the danger of renewed military conflict be reduced? An integral part of any program to institutionalize peace would be conventional arms control. Chung-In Moon (1996) analyzes both the global and regional contexts of Korean arms control. He stresses that the regional security environment does not necessarily dictate the security policy of the two Koreas.²¹ Moon argues that the principal barriers to arms control on the peninsula do not come from any external sources but from internal political dynamics and constraints on the two Korean states, and from the differences and gaps in their perceptions and information. According to him, the single most important variable in Korean arms control is political leadership. Both leaderships, especially the North Korean one, have valued 'short-term gains for regime security ... more highly than long-term collective gains for national security' (1996: 276).²²

Among various options for policy-makers, what Moon calls 'constructive engagement' seems noteworthy. This option entails combining the status quo with constructive steps aimed at reducing North Korea's sense of security threat, such as suspending the joint US-South Korean Team Spirit military exercise, and establishing liaison offices in Pyongyang and Washington and eventually full diplomatic relations.

Moon's approach towards arms control seems more practical than some of the other suggestions, such as that a political reconciliation between Pyongyang and Seoul is a prerequisite for the solution to other problems, including arms control (Ahn 1993: 97-111). Moon prefers a more technical approach to a political approach regarding the realignment of inter-Korean relations. It requires mutual recognition of the reality of two separate states on the peninsula and delinking of arms control issues from national unification (Moon 1996: 291-4). It seems productive, he suggests, combining formal and informal approaches while acknowledging the need for decisive political leadership from both sides.

Before a genuine peace and security regime can be established, it is important to make headway in reducing the tensions. These include broad measures of mutual confidence and trust building, via removal of barriers to travel and communication between the two sides of the divided Korea. Since the late 1980s, South Korea has loosened its straitjacket policy of unification after the democratic opening up and its successful northern diplomacy (*Nordpolitik*). South Korea used its trade and diplomatic relations with socialist countries to change North Korea's stance on cross-recognition and its response to the northern policy (Cotton 1993: Part III). The principal tasks in this process are twofold: to bring North Korea more into the international community, and to try to avoid collapse of the North Korean economy.

Many scholars seem to agree that reunification is inevitable if for no other reason than the unsustainability of the North Korean economy. But this seems just as imprudent as many other optimistic scenarios. Given the changing external and internal situations, South Korea must be prepared for all contingencies, ranging

from a sudden collapse of North Korea to a whirlwind unification that might come sooner than anyone can predict (Anon 1999: 3–16). It appears that the development of inter-Korean relations will maintain a slow but steady pace. It would be more constructive for South Korea to concentrate on establishing a peaceful and rewarding coexistence with North Korea than pushing for an early unification.

This chapter has emphasized the geopolitical and strategic context for reunification. The whole unification discourse reflects the unique conditions under which post-colonial Korean state formation and modernization took place, and were contested and reformulated. The division of the country superimposed by foreign powers has been a dominating factor in the Korean path to modernity. The two Koreas have developed different processes of state formation and modernization against/along with exogenous political factors. Both Koreas inherited the same historical and cultural traditions, but it was the coercive state's power that promoted the dissolution of communal identities in the uniform national identity. Demonstrating the dynamics of the historical practices of modernity, the problem of Korean (re)unification adds additional force to the argument that Korea is best interpreted as an alternative modernity.

Conclusion

Since its formation in 1948, the Republic of Korea has undergone a half-century of intensive political upheaval, rapid economic development and dynamic social change. This study has been carried out to develop an interpretive framework for understanding Korea's experience of modernity and modernization. This framework is built on the premise that modernity is multiple and every tradition unique, and deals with the problem of how the specific characteristics of Korean modernization have confronted a universal project of modernization and how, in doing so, Korea's modernity has taken shape. Korean modernity has been influenced by Western civilization(s), but at the same time has contributed to the rise of a plural community of modernities.

The real issue here is how and why Korean modernity can be seen as an alternative to the Western counterpart(s). The distinctive Korean path to, and pattern of, modernity can be described in three essential aspects of the modernity in post-war Korea: the modern nation-state, capitalist development and national integration. Each dimension includes its own set of mechanisms, but there is a unique relationship among them that defines Korean modernity. First, the take-off of capitalist development in South Korea was a part of state formation processes and was aided by the latter. For this reason, the nature of South Korean modernization has largely been determined by the characteristics of the post-colonial developmentalist state. Second, the globally conditioned division of Korea after the Second World War superimposed on the nation and contributed to the constitution of a more original and durably effective version of developmentalist state in the south. Third, the division of the country and the demand for national unification made the lack of full national legitimacy for the state more explicit and the incompleteness of Korean modernity more visible.

The unique pattern of Korean modernity is also attributed to the historical and cultural traditions, as well as the dynamics of the very process of transformation. Korea's alternative path to and through modernity draws on unique cultural resources. Deeper differences in cultural forms explain how Korea can preserve its cultural originality inside the modern project rather than breaking away from it through reactionary retreat. Values and practices linked to the rational dimension of traditional culture have adapted themselves to modern conditions. Different cultural traditions have found home in South Korea's modernization process and

influence its pattern of development. Korean cultural elements may account for both the strengths and weaknesses of Korean modernity.

A civilizational approach is not without some defects, yet its relevance lies in its interpretative insights into the Korean experience of modernity. My civilizational approach here has sought to broaden our understanding of the complexity of modernity with a better explanation of the reciprocal and cumulative effects.

It also helps to close the theoretical gap between the socio-economic oriented models and culturalist approaches. Furthermore, such a civilizational approach allows us to see the dialectic interaction of different aspects of modernity and divergent civilizational features and how a society shapes its modernity *with* its own cultural and institutional traditions.

The uniqueness of Korean civilization can be best seen in comparison with that of Japan or China. More specifically, in what way(s) has Korea been a distinctive variant of a shared East Asian civilizational pattern? While the contributions of the East Asian civilization to Korean culture are widely acknowledged, the importance of Korean civilization has been much less appreciated by Western scholars. From a civilizational perspective, this is indeed a missing link in the regional picture. I have demonstrated in this book that Korean civilization has been an indispensable background for Korean modernity.

This book has discussed the key aspects of the pre-modern Korean civilization. These include a unique combination of Korean Shamanism and Neo-Confucianism, where the former served as a prototype of Korean collective consciousness, and the latter functioned as the most enduring cultural tradition in Korea. Korean Shamanism has never been institutionalized or structured in the same way as the indigenous tradition in Japan, but it has survived radical social changes and developments over thousands of years. Neo-Confucianism at the beginning of the Yi dynasty showed more ideologically militant characteristics than anything that had happened in China, but was forced to devise a very elaborate compromise with pre-existing power structures. The ruling elite developed an exceptionally strong ideal of orthodoxy in which Confucianism was institutionalized as a means of social, cultural and political hegemony. These durable civilizational features and the long-term legacies of Korean history have been key factors in shaping the modernity of Korea.

As the Korean modernity has been achieved within its historical experience of modernization, there is always tension between modernity and modernization. Such tensions become more prominent in the ongoing interaction between the Korean state and the global system. The immediate background to post-war modernization had to do with the unique geopolitical conditions over the Korean peninsula. From the nineteenth-century rivalry between Japan, China and Russia, to the division of the country because of the Cold War, great-power politics hindered Korea's autonomous development and largely shaped the subsequent modern development. Korean modernization therefore needs to be seen in the context of the global geopolitical structure, which in my view constrains and/or facilitates, but does not determine, the modernization process at the national level.

The problem of modern state formation is a critical component of Korea's modernization. It is an important but incomplete project of modernity in Korea. I have discussed the problem of post-colonial state formation against the background of Korea's traumatic historical experience of colonialism and war. The post-colonial state took over an economic infrastructure and some part of the apparatus of the colonial power. Historical legacies such as the Japanese colonial state and the US military government have strengthened the hand of the state over civil society. The modern project was designed and implemented by the state and the bureaucratic elite. The state suppressed the emergence of autonomous societal forces, while utilizing the important preconditions and components of cultural traditions to steer the modernization project. Here I have demonstrated the structural interconnection between rapid state building, accelerated capitalist development and concomitant structures of social power.

As I have shown, there was no clear distinction between the state and civil society in traditional Korean civilization. The relationship between the state and civil society has been uneven and often seen as continual negotiation in multiple arenas. Although the influence of state power over civil society was strong, the pattern of power relations began to change with rapid industrialization, urbanization and the shifting of value orientations towards freedom, equality and political participation. The development of civil society in contemporary South Korea has been influenced by several factors. These include the development of a middle class, the individualization of social life, the growing importance of non-profit institutions, and new social movements accompanied by unprecedented economic growth and a democratic opening-up. The rise of civil society in South Korea has led to the democratization of political and social life. The end of military dictatorship, however, did not necessarily mean fundamental change in the uneven, state-centered relations between civil society and state power. The empowering of civil society as an agency to establish and consolidate democratic values and practices requires ample space for negotiations between the state and civil society.

Similar to other East Asian modernization experiences, Korean modernity is embedded in an ideological and systemic commitment to rapid economic development. Nevertheless, the East Asian model(s) of capitalism have depended on the particular situation within each country, region and civilization. Dependency and modernization theories in general and Wallerstein's world-system theory in particular have shown a one-sided focus on socio-economic structures by underrating affirmative social agency (deferral of agency) in favor of structure. Through a close examination of capitalist development in South Korea, this book has shown that South Korean modernization cannot be equated with Westernization. As has been argued in Part I, South Korean modernization is typified by tensions between indigenous models based on cultural values (e.g. patri-monialism and Neo-Confucianism) and imported Western economic, legal and political institutions.

Korean nationalism is a major ideological framework for Korean modernization, and the reunification discourse is a radical project in Korean state formation.

Korean nationalism as a unifying ideology has provided a new basis for defending national identity. It has been expressed in different narratives, demonstrating how a great deal of variation can emerge from the fluctuating social context. The formation and consolidation of the South Korean state after liberation and a full-scale economic modernization in the south complicated the unification project and, at one point, compromised democratic movements from the bottom up. Various nationalisms developed in reaction to the South Korean state, which, not least through its various repressive acts, tried to (re)affirm the culturally homogenized national self under the banner of national security.

Korean civilization is characterized by a long-time continuity and convergence of basic value orientations and persistent, structurally integrated organizational principles. This civilizational condition has provided the Korean state with deep and enduring socio-cultural homogeneity and a sense of normative order from which it can draw the legitimacy for its authority. However, the forced division of the nation deprived the state of total legitimacy and this legitimacy has been further undermined by the failure of the two Koreas to realize the goal of national reunification. Against this historical condition, the rediscovery of the other self in Korean culture and community can be the most important task of state formation. The reunification agenda is now central to the nation-building process and to the construction of a democratic national culture. Unification is understood as not just the fulfillment of a historical trajectory, but as a reconstruction of the national identity. The reinvention of national identity includes a politicization of collective memory for national discourse. Korean cultural nationalism can be used as a common basis for national reconciliation and reconstruction of the national identity. Given the different experiences and social trajectories that the two Koreas have taken, however, the nations need to be defined as a negotiated heterogeneity, rather than homogeneity imposed from above. This means that the emerging reunification discourse may transform the integrative logic of the developmentalist state, and open up different power networks in a more complex set of public culture.

Korean reunification can be seen as a path preferable to Korean modernization in several ways. Economically, their union would possibly create greater benefits than costs in the longer term. Geopolitically, the threat of war would be decreased. Culturally, it (re)constructs the national identity in an inclusive form in the global arena. While both Koreas have not yet completed their modernization project, the South Korean alternative model of modernity has proved superior to the North Korean one. However, the difference between the two Koreas requires further study in terms of different dynamics of modernization. There are other issues such as the specific patterns and techniques of nationalism, which have been manifested in statism and the perverted form of nationalism; i.e. Kim Il Sung's personality cult. It seems that nationalism has a constitutive function of social order as a key modernizing ideology. Reunification discourse must be linked to a broader interpretive framework that would allow us to radicalize and recontextualize the processes of Korean modernization and state formation. This way, it would help redefine the relationships between social actors and social systems,

and would mount a more effective challenge to the logic of convergence of modernity.

* * *

This book is an overall interpretation of the Korean path to modernity. I have put Korean modernity in the context of the 'multiple modernities' approach. After the 'economic miracle,' the crisis-ridden consequences of Korea's economic development will awaken Koreans to rethink their modern project. Insofar as Koreans grasp this opportunity for sustained cultural self-reflection, Korea's path to and through modernity will not only be different as has been argued in this book, but perhaps too one can hope that it will also be a sustainable and democratic path.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 The notion of civilization can be seen as a conceptual framework to reflect the large-scale societal constellations which can be explained in terms of 'two constitutive features: cultural creation and systemic coherence' (Arnason 1988: 91). The concept of civilization developed as 'a category under which the heterogeneous processes supposedly internal to the West, such as capitalism, nation building, industry and democracy, could be gathered, whilst simultaneously providing a broad framework through which to interpret, in negative or positive terms, the different societies that the ones from Europe came in contact with' (Rundell and Mennell 1998: 3). Drawing on Castoriadis' and Arnason's concept of culture as an open-ended, under-structured and imperfectly integrated complex of interpretive patterns, the concept of civilization here is interpreted as institutional social imaginaries, as systems of culture, economy and polity coherence, over the long term (*longue durée*).
- 2 The developmentalist state regards the advancement of industrialization as a substantive social and economic goal and defines the role of the government as taking whatever measures necessary to attain the goal effectively. In this process, the economic bureaucracy not only could manage the overall conditions of the national economy but also could allow free market enterprise and market competition to the extent that these were compatible with national development goals. Here administrative guidance is seen as the most important market-conforming method of state intervention (Johnson 1980: 318).
- 3 As will be discussed further in Part III, there are other dimensions of traditionalism that have been exploited by the state. The state has used elements of traditional legacies in a selective and strategic way. For example, Confucianism was utilized for mobilizing people and consolidating legitimacy on the one hand, and blamed for the social illness and economic backwardness on the other.
- 4 For discussions on 'alternative or multiple modernities' see, for example, *Thesis Eleven*, no. 58.

The configuration of Korean civilization

- 1 Korean's identity crisis is well expressed in a Korean writer's confession, 'I have been living through too many historical eras. I was born in a colonial and semi-feudal society, educated under a developmental autocratic rule and spent my younger years under dependent state monopoly capitalism. And now I am moving into a postmodern society. I am confused. I want to look back at my life, but I have no spare time to do so. I feel restless about my past, and scared of the future. I am trembling' (see Ju 1992: Preface).
- 2 See Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion on Korean modernization.

- 3 Seth argues that South Korean's pursuit of access to high-status education has been a national obsession, which has often been at odds with the government's educational policies designed to coordinate educational development with economic growth by emphasizing vocational and technical education (Seth 2002: Chapters 3 and 4).
- 4 'Doubtless the legacy of traditional social relations as embodied in religion, domestic subordination and agricultural routine has played a part in shaping a labor force that is at once skilled and disciplined, yet the state's educational and training policies have ensured that these disciplines and skills have assumed economically appropriate forms' (Amsden 1990: 18–19).
- 5 Kim explains *han* as a mixture of emotions such as rancor, regret, grief, remorse and revenge. It is commonly understood as a collective emotional crystal among the tormented Koreans.
- 6 For example, Lee's book, *A New History of Korea* (1984), well known as an authoritative text on the general history of Korea, covers up to the early 1960s when Korean industrialization started.
- 7 Social formation debates took place in the early 1980s after the Kwangju Incident. In these debates, attempts are made to analyze Korean society in terms of its economy, politics, society and ideology. The debates are combined with democratic and nationalistic movements during this period. For a detailed discussion of these debates, see Shin (1995).
- 8 By the 'world society,' Luhmann means the emergence of global horizons for action and experience.
- 9 The general tendency to equate the West with modernity is rooted in a civilizational narrative of world history that views other civilizations as either in conflict with or inferior to the West. Such a conceptualization is well represented in debates on the theory of Orientalism (see Said 1979).
- 10 By this, I mean a different path through/to modernity. Whereas contemporary experience shows that Western order based on liberal democracy and capitalism is hardly undermined, we have seen different configurations of modernity such as the Soviet model and the East Asian model. Development in the East, Japan and the Newly Industrialized Centres is often considered as an alternative pathway of development available to the emerging, postcolonial nation-states. However, whether there is a distinct East Asian model is arguable (Huang 2005). The East Asian economic development can be seen as the result of a complex pattern in which the achievements of Japan, China, and the other NICs differ from one another.
- 11 Eisenstadt and Schluchter are aware of this point when they say, 'Not convergence but divergence has ruled the history of modernity. These differences are not simply cultural; they have institutional dimensions as well' (1998: 4–5). 'Each civilization has developed distinct institutional formations and cultural foundations and that the specific characteristics of these civilizations should be analyzed not only in terms of their approximation to the West but also in their own terms' (1998: 7).
- 12 At the end of the nineteenth century, Korean writers learned about the West and its civilization through Japan and used the conceptual term of *munmyong kaehwa* (literally means civilization and enlightenment) to build a modern nation-state. Here, the reference to the notion of civilization to Korea has changed from China-centered to Western ideas and institutions (Duus 1995: 12; Rhee 1997: 77).
- 13 Although Braudel distinguishes four world-economies in 1500 (i.e. European, Russian, Turkish, and Far Eastern), his focus is on the European world-economy, which gives rise to the global world economy.
- 14 Braudel, following Norman Jacobs (1958), attributes the lack of preconditions of capitalism in China to China's historical and political conditions such as the longevity of the state with highly centralized bureaucracy and hierarchical Confucian tradition (1986: 586).

- 15 Wallerstein regards pre-1500 economic network as world empires, where unequal exchange was based on force, while the capitalist world-system, which he thinks began to emerge around 1450 AD, was based on supply and demand with latent force.
- 16 In his famous *Foreign Affairs* article, he uses Confucian instead of Chinese or Sinic in his categorization of major civilizations. He also excludes Korean civilization in his layout of Confucian civilization. By Confucian civilization, he refers only to China, and the overseas Chinese communities connecting Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. But, in his later book, he corrects these mistakes: he changes from Confucian to Sinic civilization, and recognizes the Korean civilization as an independent unit of peripheral civilization (Huntington 1996). For the Korean civilization reference, see Bagby (1963: 169).
- 17 Peripheral civilizations are those which have been inspired by primary civilizations that created mainstream thoughts, artistic styles, institutions, concepts and values. Toynbee classifies 'independent' civilizations and 'satellite' civilizations in his revised book, *A Study of History* (1960), and tries to give a due attention to those secondary civilizations that have been overshadowed by the primary civilizations but enable to develop their own distinctive civilizations.
- 18 Weber's later work shows that he viewed the rise of capitalism as a consequence of a concatenation of social, economic and cultural forces (1968). Weber himself underlined the importance of religious radicalism – especially Calvinist and Islamic – in the invention of various forms of practical rationalization. East Asia today along with Islamic countries, in the course of its non-Western modernization, illustrates the validity of a pluricultural and polynormative model of rationalization.
- 19 In Weber's typology, the West has a decentralizing tendency, encouraged by the appropriation of fiefs, the contractual relations between rulers and their vassals, and the notion of status honor that helped the rise of the landed class, who possessed power and wealth independent of their rulers. In contrast, the East favors centralizing control, which depends upon the administrative services of prebend-holding officials, the absence of a supreme officialdom that prevented any possibility for independent group consolidation of power and wealth. At the same time, it needs to be noted that the characteristics of patrimonialism and feudalism could be found in both the East and the West. Rather, Weber's focus was on the form of domination based on the proposition that political action is conditioned by social characteristics (Weber 1984).
- 20 The characteristics of patrimonial China described in *The Religion of China* may be summarized as follows: a relatively strong money economy and enormous population growth without the accompanying development of capitalistic phenomena; the lack of political autonomy of cities and guilds; the persistent sib organization at the local level; the literary qualifications for government office and the development of a civil service examination system, which formed a status group whose distinct way of life set them apart from the rest of society and made them dependent upon the will of the ruler; the lack of an innovative spirit both in the orthodoxy of Confucianism and the heterodoxy of Taoism (Weber 1964).
- 21 Hamilton argues that the Chinese society has developed a very different type of social order from that found in the West. The Chinese concept of *hsiao* (or filial piety) institutionalized an organismic Confucian role concept while the concept of *patria potestas* institutionalized the Western legal jurisdiction (1990: 82–5).
- 22 According to Eisenberg, the Weberian concept of patrimonialism is an accurate tool for the interpretation and analysis of imperial Chinese history.
- 23 Tu Wei-Ming emphasizes the diversity of Confucianism which increases its adaptability to a variety of changing social and political conditions: 'The spiritual orientation of pre-Ch'in Confucianism was significantly different from the institutionalized Confucian value system of the Han; the appropriation of Confucian ideas in the T'ang central bureaucracy did not at all resemble the Confucian concerns as reflected in the ethos of Sung scholar-officialdom, and the struggle of Confucian "intellectuals" against the despotic

- rule of the Ming court must not be confused with the plight of Confucian officials under the literary inquisition of the Ch'ing' (Tu 1979: 280–1).
- 24 Weber thinks that the influence of Buddhism is only minor and Taoism is basically magical, so that Confucianism is the main religious rationalism of the patrimonial bureaucracy (Weber 1968: 30).
 - 25 In this regard, Arnason points out, there was 'tension between two constitutive components, i.e. legalist thoughts and techniques of administration' in respect to the Chinese bureaucratic systems, which has gone beyond Weber's patrimonial principles (1998c: 40).
 - 26 With regard to this point, Tu Wei-Ming *et al.* argue, 'The vital energy inherent in human relationship offers a way to transform society and to establish a particular political structure. For that reason, a dominant theme in Confucian political ideology is ethics, not power ... Throughout East Asia, the state is seen as a mechanism for exerting social control and establishing and maintaining moral order' (1992: 10–11). In the same context, Arnason (1998b) points out that while the traditional state-centered social order lost the cosmological frame of reference, the functionalist (anti-political) notion of the state continues to be important in East Asian political tradition.
 - 27 Especially, Zen Buddhism became the decisive religion for the Japanese warrior caste by linking to Bushido, the 'Way of Warrior'; Zen was seen more as a meditation technique and a method of mental and physical discipline than as a substantial doctrine. Later, not only Buddhism but also Confucianism were incorporated into the indigenous Shinto religion and reformulated with nationalism.
 - 28 Eisenstadt notes Japan's unique characteristics: on the one hand, despite strong structural similarities between Japan and Western Europe which promoted modernization, there existed and exists significant differences in the definition, regulation, and cultural contexts of modern institutions (1995: 147–75). In Japan, unlike Western Europe but in keeping with other East Asian civilizations, there exists continuity between the mundane and transcendental worlds. This belief system blurs the distinction between various social sectors and a strong regulatory state. On the other hand, in contrast to the other East Asian civilizations, Japan shows a very high level of structural differentiation, mobility, openness and dynamism, each of which are grounded in conceptions of service to social goals, particularly to the national community.
 - 29 For Eisenstadt, primordiality, civility and sacredness are ideal types of the construction of collective identity, but they depend on the historical cultural programs.
 - 30 Japan continues to adhere to a mythology of ethnic homogeneity. Here primordial, civic, and cultural codes of boundary construction are described with respect to their logic of exclusion, which make it difficult for the state to acknowledge its minorities (see De Vos 1995: 264–97).
 - 31 Despite her insightful analysis of the ethos of the samurai, Ikegami's identification of the roots of this ethos with individualism seems problematic. Even if we admit the individualistic characters in the ethos of the samurai through the tension between the cooperation and competition, this should be understood in the unique Japanese civilizational context. By this I mean a dual civilization: 'It is affiliated to the China-centered East Asian complex and at the same time characterized by distinctive traits of its own' (Arnason 1998c: XVI).
 - 32 See more discussion on this in Chapter 4.
 - 33 Saha examines the impact of three components of indigenous Japanese culture – Shinto, Zen Buddhism and Confucianism – on Japan's absorption and development of Western technology: 'Zen has fostered preferences for self-reliance, the direct approach, and willingness to hard work, and to sacrifice comforts. Confucianism emphasizes learning and group harmony. Shinto encourages the open acceptance of sensual gratification' (1994: 225). Saha argues that these values have shaped the course of modern technology in Japan. In a similar context, Rarick (1994) also emphasises the religious and philosophical influences of Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism on the Japanese management practices.

- 34 According to Weber, Confucian patrimonial bureaucracy lacks the distinctive boundaries between the private and official spheres that define a 'proper' or 'ideal' bureaucracy (1968: 1049). However, the Korean bureaucracy does not conform to Weber's understanding of a Confucian bureaucracy: there was a distinct political and economic balance of power between the monarch and the aristocratic bureaucrats.
- 35 Here, the concept of familism is more than family values, which is commonly used in Western countries. Familism is more about hierarchical social relationships. Different patterns of familism in East Asia are reflected in different cultural, organization and business realities. Broadly speaking, the Japanese emphasize group membership and de-emphasize the individual; the Chinese stress relationships between persons of equal status that is based on an exchange of favors; the Koreans give emphasis to an authoritarian relationship between persons of unequal status, based on the demand for obedience on the part of the subordinate.
- 36 In this regard, de Bary (1983) presents different aspects of Neo-Confucianism. According to him, Neo-Confucianism embraces strong claims about the moral nature of human beings, individual perfectibility, and the autonomy of the moral mind and individual conscience. Some advanced proposals include the self-governance of local communities, a reformed conception of the law as a necessary force to check the political abuse of the people, and even a conception of public education as a means of enhancing people's political participation in their local communities.

The search for meaning in Korean culture

- 1 As we can see, there are many different interpretations of modernity from both positive and negative viewpoints. Fukuyama's 'end of history' seems to be a semi-empirical proposition based on a preconceived premise. His arguments resonate only partially with the images of modernity.
- 2 Hegel (1953) saw the history of mankind as the actualization of the principle of personal freedom in higher forms. His social philosophy signaled a new and higher phase in the development of reason.
- 3 Fukuyama presupposes a universal eternal subject that unifies particular individuals, but is not identified with any discrete individual. This eternal subject (first man) makes knowledge possible, provides direction, and proposes human motivation. This distinction between an essential man and a contingent person is useful in that it provides a standard of impartiality without which the abstract concept of equality is hard to conceive.
- 4 Fukuyama tells us that *thymos* lies at the heart of the work ethic. He encourages us to see the Japanese salary man as an example of having a *thymotic* attachment to one's group. What he says about the importance of *thymos* usually sounds convincing as long as it refers to 'equal recognition' rather than to 'superiority.' In Confucian societies in East Asia the maintenance of order and respect for hierarchy have been central values; thereby the *thymotic* passion for civil recognition has not surfaced independently.
- 5 The interaction of economic progress and local cultures appears to generate a distinct variety of democratic institutions. If democracy is understood as a system of power under which no group can guarantee that its interests will automatically or always prevail, the accommodation by Asian democracy of periodic alternations of power at the center remains to be consolidated. As we find in cases such as Singapore and Malaysia, democratization in Asia has flexibly constrained forms.
- 6 In this regard, Fukuyama seems to equate the East–West tensions with the North–South tensions: when the Cold-War ends, conflicts between the industrialized North and the impoverished South also ended as soon as other countries that still remain in the middle or out of history achieve the development of science and technology.

- 7 By the 'first man's task' I mean the completion of the nation-state formation, i.e. reunification; by the 'last man's idleness,' individuals preoccupied with material and egotistic needs rather than the common good.
- 8 Jacobs articulates the conception of patrimonialism through selected sets of characteristics of a patrimonial social order in contrast to a feudal social order. For him, the terms patrimonial and feudal are model descriptions that can provide a 'guide to understanding a particular query about a particular reality' (1985: 3). His patrimonial model of Korean society can be best understood in the context of state power and cultural identity.
- 9 Hamilton and Biggart admit the importance of economic and cultural factors in explaining the growth of market and economic enterprise, but argue that the organizational structure can be better understood by the political economic approach in accounting for historical and social variations within a similar cultural region.
- 10 Cox, in his review essay on a book, *Exporting the American Gospel*, explains how Christianity in Korea has grown so quickly in a short period through a hybrid form of Christianity, Pentecostalism (from 5 percent soon after the Korean War to 35 percent of the population now). He rejects the idea of global Christian Fundamentalism, and attributes the acceleration of Pentecostalism in South Korea to social and historical conditions, including Shamanistic factors and materialist values (1997). In another example, we find a similar connection between the Shamanistic worldview and Christianity. An American-Korean novelist Chang-Rae Lee properly captures this feature through a Korean immigrant's character: 'There were the inalienable risks of the immigrant. I was to inherit them, the legacy unfurling before me this way ... Your family was your life, though you rarely saw them. You never missed a mortgage payment or a day of church. You prayed furiously until you wept. You considered the only unseen forces to be capitalism and the love of Jesus Christ...' (Lee 1995:47).
- 11 Kyong-Dong Kim defines *han* as a kind of 'psychological complex or emotional state which is usually caused by severe frustration or some unjust wrongs done to you, which therefore involves an acute sense of regret, remorse, hatred, "revengefulness," which have accumulated individually and/or collectively in the turbulent Korean history' (1996: 67). In this sense, *han* is the power of tragic experience, and becomes a kind of energy source that serves to achieve something desired.
- 12 It must be considered, at the same time, that Tonghak drew its ideas from other religions as well, such as Christianity and Confucianism. However, in the new religious movements, the national identity was fostered more by the Shamanistic rituals than other religions. This tradition is inherited by contemporary social movements (Kim, Y. 1992).
- 13 Since then each of the Three Kingdoms – Koguryo, Paekche and Silla in turn – adopted the Confucian ethos as a means of maintaining their centralized aristocratic state structures.
- 14 Neo-Confucianism emphasized personal cultivation through the rationalization and abstraction of Confucianism. That is, the basic commitment of Confucianism to the ideal of a moral community based on humanistic ethical norms is reinforced through theoretical refinement and generalization (moralization of Heavenly principle or cosmicalization of morality)(de Bary 1983: 40–1). But Korean Neo-Confucian intellectualism became highly metaphysical and individualistic at the expense of instrumental intellectualism. Thus, Korean Neo-Confucianism became bifurcated into over-intellectualism at the poles of man and Heaven and non-intellectualism in the intermediary zones of society, polity, and nationality (Hwang 1979: 487–8).
- 15 Among the Korean Confucian schools, there was the movement known as *Shilhak*, which showed keen interest in Western science and social reform. But its scope was limited: the main trend of the *Shilhak* movement tended to reaffirm Confucian tenets rather than replace them. Despite its failure in changing the social structures, *Shilhak* scholars who were acquainted with Catholicism or Christianity tried to modernize the old dynasty (Chung, E.Y. 1992; Lee, J. 1986).

- 16 In a different context, Oesterich (1982) also shows the relationship between neostoicism and the early modern states of Europe in the late sixteenth century. Here, he tries to show how neostoicism brought about the spiritual, moral and psychological changes through the social discipline, which was to guarantee the new order in the shape of the absolutist state. These changes played a crucial role in the later development of modern industrialism and democracy in the sense that both presupposed a work ethic and a sense of responsibility.
- 17 For the difference between authority and power, see Arendt (1961: 93) and Oakeshott (1991: 445–8). The Korean case, like other East Asian countries, shows an attempt to fuse authority and power through Confucian ethics.
- 18 Within Neo-Confucian ethics, in which hierarchically structured human relationships are considered the ideal, it seems difficult to imagine the growth of individual autonomy. However, without individual autonomy, can we have an autonomous society? This is a very complicated question that cannot be answered by using a simple logic of individualism versus collectivism, and is beyond the scope of this thesis. It suffices to mention that in the Confucian tradition, an individual as a moral being is seen to be an integral part of the social collectivity.
- 19 In the traditional Korean culture, there is no place for the capital 'I': Koreans understand self-respect in the context of the family or extended family relationships rather than in terms of individual autonomy.
- 20 See more discussion on this in Chapter 4.
- 21 Rituals are essentially related to the understanding of human personality, not at a psychological level, but in existential, moral and spiritual terms. When rituals are performed with the proper attitude, the actions potentially disclose what is deepest and, in the process, transform the participants; rituals are, therefore, not mechanical but interpersonal. What is exchanged is unspeakable and beyond language. If performed with correctness of attitude, the action substitutes for the language. In the process of ritual, one naturally forgets oneself; instead finding identity in/through the other thereby transforming one's personality. This is a humanizing process where the sacred and the secular come together.
- 22 In traditional Korean society, the gentlemen scholars (*sunbi*) were at the core of national development. They were usually expected to have a sense of civic responsibility for the realization of public justice (Jung 1998: 12–17).
- 23 The central question is how Koreans make use of their cultural resources positively to create their own, particular form of modernity. Merton's insight seems valuable in saying 'neither the ancient wisdom nor the modern sciences are complete in themselves' (Merton 1965: 1).
- 24 In the modernization process, tradition has been interpreted, instrumentalized and re-invented by various groups at different levels. Self-reflexibility and critique of modern life resulted from the individual and collective experience of a modernity that embodies an emancipatory potentiality.

State formation in post-colonial Korea

- 1 Arnason's notion of 'secondary state formation' allows space for different modes of power configuration in the civilizing process acknowledging the dynamics between political power and historical and cultural legacies.
- 2 In this regard, Durkheim tried to bridge the sphere of public values and private interests by defining individualism as a collective ideology. For him, the cult of the individual is defined as a social bond that could alleviate dialectic tensions between the individual subject and the emerging institutions – a role once held by religion (Durkheim 1951: 336).
- 3 If the development of a distinct separation of public and private spheres is an essential constituent of modernity, we must recognize that many of the newly industrialized

countries (NICs), regardless of the successfulness of their industrialization projects, are not modern. If the concept of modernity is connected with the novel understanding of time–space homogeneity and simultaneity, Korean society was subjected to the worldwide standardization of time by importing a new concept of time as an abstract object of contemplation and science in the late nineteenth century. In addition, the imposition of a Western-style legal codification led to a great division between private and public life in the reform enactment of 1894. Nevertheless, there was a public sphere founded in Korean civilization in two aspects – the official sphere and the private sphere. This public sphere was constructed by the Confucian literati who held cultural hegemony in the Choson dynasty (see Chapter 4).

- 4 Mann examines the profound transformations in the scope and intensity of all forms of social power in the West in the nineteenth century.. He shows that the triple revolutions of the late eighteenth century (the American, French and Industrial revolutions) established a common framework of social change, and argues that the emergence of uniquely modern forms of political, cultural, military and economic organization were the key forces in creating classes and nations, and in turn, shaping the character of early modern states.
- 5 This is an interesting point that can be applied to the South Korean case of class formation. Unlike the other East Asian countries, South Korea has seen the development of strong (militant) labor movements and working class identity within state-led industrialization (see Koo 1996: 53–76). I return to this point in more detail in the discussion of the formation of the middle class(es) and democratization (see Chapter 4).
- 6 Here, I use the concept of state as a variable on two levels: the administrative power of the state (i.e. the capacity of the state as a governing organization to extract resources) and the territorial power of the state (i.e. the economic, military and diplomatic resources that the state possesses as sovereignty in relation to other states). Structurally, administrative power is dependent upon the territorial power of the state because the amount of available resources is affected by the expansion and contraction of territory. The territorial power of the state is geopolitical in nature: both state growth and state fragmentation are caused by external changes in geopolitical conditions as these affect the internal legitimacy of state organization. The effects of geopolitical advantage and disadvantage upon the internal strength and weakness of state power are found in the Korean case.
- 7 This produced a Korean diaspora abroad. When the large group of sojourns returned to Korea after liberation, they accelerated the conflict between the different nationalist groups because of their different political ideologies and expectation in nation-building process.
- 8 With respect to the state in post-colonial societies, Hamza Alavi argues that there are three propertied classes in post-colonial societies: the metropolitan bourgeoisie, the indigenous bourgeoisie and the landed classes. He sees the state in post-colonial society as being relatively autonomous and mediating between the competing interests of the three propertied classes. However, his analysis does not fit the Korean case, where there was neither a single ruling class nor dominant classes (Alavi 1972: 59–81).
- 9 In contrast to the Soviet's control over the North Korean government and army, China played no significant role in North Korea before the Chinese Communists defeated the Nationalists in 1949 and consolidated their power in China. There were no formal diplomatic relations between North Korea and China until after the break of the Korean War (Kim, J. 1975: 174).
- 10 The Korean War also needs to be understood in the context of the Cold War. It started as a civil war but quickly developed as an international war with the intervention of American troops under the banner of the United Nations and countering the entry of China into the war.
- 11 The comparison of state formation between South Korea and Indonesia here can be best understood in the context of 'secondary state formation' (Arnason 1996).

- 12 It shows that the continuous and dynamic interactions of state elites with social class/sector and external agents – within some structural constraints imposed by the existing class structure, global political and economic circumstances, the levels of economic development, and cultural and historical legacy – decide state capability which is comprised of state resources, internal and external state autonomy and state legitimacy. The South Korean state has regarded until recent years playing an autonomous and influential role in the political and economic domains by enhancing its capability through institutionalization of social organizations.
- 13 Democratization in South Korea has established a procedural democracy thanks to the robust civil society but there is found serious deficiencies in the rule of law, the constitutional principle of check and balance (Shin 2003). In the policymaking process, it is perceived that the imbalance between the president and the National Assembly is that the president's strong leadership has often been unchecked by the National Assembly, although we are witnessing a rather different power structure in Noh's government.
- 14 When Park seized power in 1961, he exploited key institutional changes designed by his predecessor, the constitutionally elected regime of Prime Minister Chang Myon. But this fact has been dismissed by many technocrats and economists to justify authoritarian quasi-military and technocratic rule in the process of economic growth.
- 15 Most studies in South Korea have emphasized the ideological split between progressivism and conservatism, and have underestimated the political orientation and heterogeneous subcategories of the middle class. The Korean middle class can be divided into two heterogeneous subclasses: professionals who provide their skill assets in exchange for capital rewards and managers/supervisors who earn capital gains through the control of labor and enhance productivity through coordinating divided labor groups. Managers/supervisors lack autonomy and are dependent on capitalists for the reproduction of their class status. Professionals are pro-labor and the prime agents of politics, and are more likely to form and transform class collectivity and culture.
- 16 Under the Park regime, the government's tight control of labor denied the rights of unions to operate independently, thus justifying government intervention in economic affairs through state corporatism. Park's export-, industry-, growth-oriented strategy not only brought about rapid export expansion but also altered the industrial structure. The neoconservative reforms under Chun in the early 1980s restructured industry to increase international competitiveness, but it also gave rise to labor-management conflict due to the expansion of working class militancy.

Civil society, reflexive subject and transformative culture

- 1 The development of civil society and actor's choices can be better understood in relation to a unique organizational constellation and historical context (Shin 1999). Arnason and Castoriadis highlight the neglected significance of cultural dimension in critique of modernity and in a self-reflexive and self-instituting form of society. It is appropriate to incorporate actors' participation in socio-cultural creativity.
- 2 For this critique, see Craig Calhoun (1992).
- 3 'Civil society' is the sphere of solidarity that defines a national collectivity as a society. 'Citizenship' is a good example of a collective identity that is largely conditioned by the representation of national identity that prevails in a state of national identity (see Calhoun 1995: 247–8). On the other hand, as Tester argues, civil society can be just an imagination by which the 'existential and interpretive flux and intrinsic strangeness of modernity could be explained' (1992: 146). That is, civil society ties the disconnected strangers into communities of mutual responsibility through the imaginary significations.
- 4 As de Bary (1998) points out, the mere existence of relatively independent local organizations would not serve the purposes of a civil infrastructure conveying public opinion and popular criticism upward to the top. It does not follow, though, that there was no

- civil society in premodern Korea. There were civil and associational relationships on the level of voluntary, nongovernmental and communal activities such as *Kye* (revolving credit society) and *Hyangyak* (rules and contracts among villagers for mutual support) based on an agricultural economy (see, Lee, H.-K. 1995: 161; Kim, H. R. 2002).
- 5 There have been ongoing theoretical debates among Korean scholars regarding the relevance and role of civil society in Korea. The term '*shimin sahoe*' (literally meaning city people) is used for the Korean equivalent of civil society. It seems that there is some overlapping between the concepts of *shimin sahoe* and *minjung* in terms of the main agent of social movements in South Korea (Choi 1993a; Kim, S. 2001). Hahm argues for a difference between the two terms, in that *shimin sahoe* shows ambivalent attitude towards the public/private distinction presupposed in the Western concept of civil society (Hahm 2004). Hahm relates *shimin sahoe* to the role of citizens in a modern democracy and associates with the post-democratization period since 1987.
 - 6 As mentioned in Chapter 1, Henderson maintains that a structural vacuum existed between the political center and the periphery in Korean society. He finds a pattern of extreme centripetal dynamics in the Korean politics that drives 'all active elements of the society upward toward central power' (1968: 5). This 'centripetal' force of Korean politics broke the political linkages between the center and the periphery. According to Henderson, Korea's unity and homogeneity make any groupings artificial, opportunistic and factional. However, his notion of mass society cannot explain the different dynamic between the state and the society ingrained in the commanding ideology of Confucianism. The king was the mediator between Heaven and the people (i.e. mandate of Heaven) and the bureaucratic aristocracy constituted a special class in society, representing a commitment to service of the state and the society, in the name of the common good. Henderson sees only one side of Confucianism as statecraft, thus missing the other side of egalitarianism. Despite the conservative nature of Confucianism, the Confucian values and symbols have not always been manipulated for political convenience.
 - 7 Comparing the role of civil society in South Korea and Taiwan, He finds that the South Korean government has exercised much stricter control over nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) than has the Taiwanese government by manipulating NGOs and using them as a tool both to gain a wider consensus and to legitimize the state's policy on the national identity problem (He, B. 1999: 43–4).
 - 8 Kwang-Ok Kim explains how *minjung* movement brought Shamanistic rituals into the arena of political resistance: 'Shamanism is chosen as a symbol of the pure Korean cultural tradition...The purported underlying ideology of shamanism is utilized to proclaim marginal people's direct confrontation with the absolute state power' (Kim, K.-O. 1994: 209).
 - 9 Habermas shows a pluralist understanding of reason, in which a number of human interests and different forms of human knowledge are coupled: empirical-analytic interest corresponds to explanatory theories, communicative interest to hermeneutic endeavors, and emancipatory interest to liberating knowledge (Habermas 1971: 301–17).
 - 10 Geertz argued that 'culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly that is thickly – described' (1973: 14). His approach allows a text to be related to whatever other particular texts illuminate it. Geertz focuses on a unified semiotic system, in which the analysis focuses on a single text and arrays other meanings around it. However, people often participate in multiple practices (reality) with various underlying meaning systems, and there may be conflicts between interpretations. By contrast, Bourdieu concentrates on the influences and significations of power and political culture in the collective identities of members of specific local societies (1979; 1984). He shows how power groups and individuals try to reproduce and justify the socio-cultural status quo and the current power relationships. But he reduces the concepts of culture capital and symbolic capital to economic language, including

division of the social world into the longstanding dualistic categories of material base and ideology and thus fails to recognize the dependence of symbolic capital on the views of agents. (In this regard, we can find some similarities between Bourdieu and Fukuyama in terms of social capital.) The way Bourdieu conceptualizes culture almost precludes the possibility of intellectual activists participating together with the dominated in democratic politics.

- 11 Dryzek tries to expand rationality to encompass communicative practices including the natural world (1987; 1990).
- 12 In this regard, de Bary makes a good point: 'There is no basis for asserting any inherent incompatibility between Confucianism and the human rights to which most nations subscribe... The dichotomy of "individual" versus "community" right is inapplicable and misleading in this case... To learn from the experience of the Confucians need not mean surrendering anything of individual rights to the communities or state, but only gaining a deeper awareness of human interdependence and social sensibilities' (1998: 155–6).
- 13 For the present purpose, I discuss only a Confucian version of Asian values. But Kahn's analysis of Malaysian experience offers insights into a notion of Asian values which is congruent with those of other East Asian countries. It reflects the dynamics of Asian modernization, which can be seen as a critique of Western perspectives of modernity (Kahn 1997).
- 14 Confucianism stresses human relatedness and participation in a shared life. In Confucian tradition, a moral tradition of a shared life is provided by common understanding of roles and obligations. The foundation of Confucianism is reciprocity, and humankind is conceived of as a network of relationships that create a 'familial self.' In this sense, Confucianism is different from the Rawlsian notion of social obligation, because it stresses reciprocity rather than equality in interpersonal exchanges. Reciprocity sanctified is piety; piety is altruistic. Deeds are performed for the sake of the other(s). Confucianism raises the ethical over the epistemological: its ethics are concerned with responsibility in which the primacy of the other goes hand in hand with personhood and self-fulfillment.
- 15 Social mobility is integrated with a legitimate political structure. Confucianism's moral laws, the ideological link in a socio-political dynasty, include patrimonialism, in which the government has ultimate control, but also the scholarly officials who were given a hereditary social status had a moral responsibility and moralistic orthodoxy. Through the law of virtue, the *yangban* aristocracy could restrain the strong monarchy.
- 16 Although economic performance is paramount in the minds of Asia's ruling elites, there are wide differences within Asia regarding human rights, international authorities, and political and social freedoms.
- 17 There exists some ambiguity between the concepts of offering gifts and offering bribes from an ethical point of view based on the Korean social norms (Chang, C. *et al.* 2001).
- 18 The traditional legacy of corruption has also been used as a springboard for social reform, as in the case of the Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung governments' anti-corruption policies. Given the fact that corruption is firmly rooted among the elite of South Korea, however, participation by citizens in decision-making processes is important not only to enhance the degree of accountability of the government, but also to empower civil society to supervise its elected representatives.
- 19 Moran (1999) sees corruption as a manifestation of a specific set of state–society relations, political system, developmentalist trajectory and type of external linkages. He argues that corruption in South Korea has coexisted with economic development, and that the coordinates of corruption altered with economic development and democratization because of organizational logics and economic rationality. Wedeman (1997) also presents an interesting analysis of the corruption–growth relationship. According to his comparative study, corruption itself does not directly reduce economic growth. High levels of corruption are associated with different rates of economic growth. It depends on the forms of corruption, the relative profitability of domestic investment, and corrupt

- officials' assumption about the future. In the South Korean case, he argues that high levels of corruption have coexisted with high rates of growth because of the efficacy of dividend-collecting (i.e. the transfers of a percentage of the profits earned by privately owned enterprises to government officials in return for policies and services that allow these enterprises to earn profits) under the guidance of the developmentalist state.
- 20 We can interpret this family-egoism, at best, as reciprocal altruism between generations, because it leads to a reinforcement of the multiplicative effects of a family's wealth and power.
 - 21 In Korean culture, Confucian tradition provides a fertile ground for norms and ethics. Whether one believes in Christianity or Buddhism, Koreans are heavily influenced by Confucian cultural norms, particularly in respect for the family and idealization of the hierarchical social relationship.
 - 22 The title of Sorensen's book, *Over the Mountains are Mountains: Korean peasant households and their adaptations to rapid industrialization*, is symbolic because, as the author explains: as soon as you overcome one crisis, another looms. This reflects the Korean worldview – no matter how many obstacles (social changes) are ahead, life is going on (live as it comes). What I interpret from this book is that this kind of 'shamanistic' worldview makes Korean society look modern from outside, yet traditional from inside.
 - 23 Sorensen attributes the changes in social organization to changes in strategies in the allocation of labor and capital, rather than to the changes in the rules of social structure (1988: 204, 236).

The historical sociology of Korea's modernization

- 1 Shin and Robinson emphasize inclusive and pluralist approaches to colonial modernity, in which colonial, modernity and nationalism are treated as three interlocking and mutually influencing ideas (1999: 1–18).
- 2 In this discourse, some restricted the meaning of imperialism by arguing that semi-feudal agriculture could continue under capitalist development. Others who tried to combine the two perspectives, saw colonial Choson as a transitional society and coupled colonial stagnation to progressive capitalism, arguing that colonial stagnation was neither a different development nor a new social formation, but simply a stage where 'universal' historical development was delayed by imperialism and/or other historical conditions (Suh 1996: 163–6).
- 3 In this regard McNamara characterized the Japanese model of capitalism during colonial rule as 'an odd blend of military priorities, authoritarian rule, and the remarkable mobilization of Korean labor and Japanese capital for the construction of economic infrastructure, Japanese mining, and heavy industrial plants' (1990: 50).
- 4 As mentioned in Chapter 2, Jacobs points out a crucial difference between Korean and Japanese development: While Japan's feudal legacy provided a tradition of strong, capable interest groups who were able to assert themselves against central government authority, Korean society developed according to what Jacobs called 'patrimonial principles' (Jacobs 1985: 3–5). In contrast to Japan's early modernization, Korea was unable to indigenize borrowings from the West, with the result that traditional social principles were reinforced and modified without achieving the institutional formations of modernity.
- 5 As Chung and Branscomb (1995: 225–28) note, Korea's overall policy still has a short-term orientation despite its current emphasis on globalization: the leading role of science and technology in the nation's future is not fully recognized in the plan for a 'New Economy,' which has been the basic framework of all governments since 1987.
- 6 The conceptualization of South Korean modernization can be seen in different discourses. They include theories of industrialization, democratization, dependency and world-systems and bureaucratic authoritarianism. In addition to this, there is a critical appropriation,

which seeks to move into an open and non-oppressive society using a critically evaluated tradition.

- 7 This point seems to fit into Bourdieu's main assumption: economic exchange is a special case of social exchange and social life is a continual struggle for profitable exchanges between social capital and status groups. Bourdieu (1979) emphasizes the importance of power relationships in the crystallization and reproduction processes of different levels of sociocultural integration and identity.
- 8 We also need to take into account the good timing of the integration of East Asian countries into the world-system and the stable macroeconomic management United States contributed to the stabilization of the East Asian economies.
- 9 Any society needs to be grounded in a relatively coherent image of itself to which all members attach themselves. This image constitutes a cognitive order that requires the recognition of society's members to persist. In the case of South Korea, the state is a more powerful actor than any other societal group within the collective identity.
- 10 We have witnessed the weakening of the South Korean student movement after democratization. By arguing for political change as the only means to fulfill their demands, student activists had to delegate their power and become dependent on electoral democracy.
- 11 In this regard, much more has to be said about the conflicts between the government and the conglomerates whose interests are not as interlocked as in the past. Furthermore, globalization raises the possibility of a divergence between global strategies of firms and national interests; however, these have not yet fully manifested themselves.
- 12 The prominent civil organizations such as the Citizen's Coalition for Economic Justice, the election watch campaigns and anti-pollution environmental groups, are working to protect the interests of the citizens by increasing participation, accountability and transparency in the political and socioeconomic arenas. However, civil society and all its manifestations are not necessarily beneficial, progressive or integrating. Although Korea's new social movements were initially democratic and spontaneous, they have adopted nationalistic strategies and ideologies that may threaten the competency of the civil society. The NGOs tend to maintain a narrow focus and become more sympathetic to the generalized professional middle class than to oppressed groups.
- 13 Held focuses on issues associated with 'double-sided democratization' – the needs of both state and society for democratization and restructuring- and the dynamics of democracy at the national level. He raises two central issues focusing on Western nation-states: the adequacy of liberalist representative democracy and feasibility of participatory democracy in complex societies and the viability of a socialist form of democracy (Held 1992: 33).
- 14 In this regard, there remains a certain degree of strain in Korean political culture, stemming from the mutual alienation of state and society during Japanese colonization. I am also aware that a discourse about Confucian legacy (e.g. authoritarian conservatism) and its traditions (e.g. values of a structured hierarchical society) could reify political and cultural discourse, and that traditional authority, which has often been unchecked, is yet scrutinized by succeeding generations in contemporary Korea. At this point, however, my emphasis is on the persistence of an influential non-democratic political culture, which requires more cultural change as well as institutional reform for the consolidation of democratization.
- 15 It may be said that neofamilism and Neo-Confucianism are a double-edged sword: they are a strong incentive for industrialization on the one hand; they blunt modernization's effect on the other. At the same time, the blending of traditional and modern values often creates paradoxes. The South Korean interventionist state hampered free market forces but fostered economic growth by utilizing cultural traditions in a selective way.
- 16 The South Korean authoritarian state used to (and still does in a sense) resort to violence when faced with democratic dissent because both dissidents and state elites subscribe to the Confucian discourse of parental governance. Democratization has not

eradicated this deep-rooted source of Confucian hegemony in Korean political culture. Democracy does not have a fixed, indisputable definition. Its meaning in the context of the Korean student movement cannot be discussed apart from the existing power structure and intellectual climate. The ideals of civil society and democracy contest the values of patronage and clientelism. Democracy makes provision for representation and generation and mitigates hierarchical logic, while clientelism and patronage operate with asymmetrical power arrangements and inequalities, structured together with interpersonal commitment. This duality can coexist because democracy implies political, but not socio-economic, equality.

Korea's rise and integration into the world system

- 1 In this case, we need to take his comparison of the two countries with reservation, since there is no Soviet parallel to South Korea's successful move into more advanced dimension of technology. In addition, the Soviet model was more technologically dependent than Kagarlitsky has acknowledged.
- 2 People are ready to make almost any sacrifices to fulfill their cravings for a modern economy with all that it entails. The military governments have fought to carry through a high growth policy emphasizing that growth will strengthen the nation, while allocating huge expenditures for defence against North Korea. But this experience has been predicated on the economic community.
- 3 Amsden emphasized the economic rationale in the South Korean government disciplining big business by penalizing poor and rewarding good performance. Amsden proclaims Korean industrialization as an instance of a more general phenomenon. In her argument, four essential elements of late development are distinctive: an interventionist state, large diversified business groups, an abundant supply of competent salaried managers, and an abundant supply of low-cost, well-educated labor (1989).
- 4 As the relative increase of external influences on Korea's societal development has contributed to Korea's current developmental difficulties, the recent transformation of the semi-peripheral and peripheral countries can be better understood in terms of a more contingent and dynamic regionalist perspective. Such a perspective considers the world-system as more differentiated and relatively open-ended at the moment, a situation that allows for some degree of freedom to locate successfully in niches such as in the periphery of the core (see So and Chiu 1996; 1998).
- 5 War is not only compatible with economic growth; it can also be a catalyzer for growth, resulting in a restructuring of the hierarchical world-system. During this century Korea has been both: 'a springboard for Japanese expansionism and a fulcrum for the US defense of Japan from communism' (Kim and Kong 1997: 3). The Korean War defined the parameters of America's commitment to and involvement in the Cold War. American politics forged a new bipartisan consensus based upon internationalism (Soviet containment) and a moderate social welfare state.
- 6 The military was the key to post-war South Korean development along with strong influences from Japan in the form of bureaucratic and economic models. Lone and McCormack characterize the development of South Korea as that of 'garrison-state' (1993: 132).
- 7 The problematic nature of Korean-American relations, which were adversely to affect the way in which diplomacy was carried out, was mainly caused by the asymmetry in the size, power and stability of the two governments. There have been some conflicts with certain key issues such as the northern policies, human rights and democratization.
- 8 A bureaucratic, authoritarian, developmental South Korean state was able to mobilize an economically fragmented, politically weak agricultural sector to support the national industrialization drive at the expense of the welfare of farmers and workers.

- 9 The period of relative decline in US economic hegemony has been followed by the emergence of multilateral hegemonic social practices. Europe's response to America's declining position has been an attempt to articulate a new social model capable of successfully replacing the disarticulated post-war Keynesian social-welfare model.
- 10 To describe the rapid economic growth in the region, many authors elaborate on Akamatsu's thesis of the flying geese pattern of development, with Japan leading the formation, followed by the four dragons and in turn by the next subgroups such as the ASEAN countries and China (Das 1996; McMichael 1996: 84).
- 11 In the case of North Korea, the situation has deteriorated more sharply than that of South Korea. The North has become increasingly isolated, having lost the backing of its giant state socialist neighbors. With the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, North Korea lost not only its military and diplomatic support, but also subsidies for crucial materials such as oil. North Korea is also losing the loyalty and financial support of Japanese Koreans, as the reality of North Korea is fully revealed and as Japan is buffeted by financial woes (Shim 1997: 28–30). More Japanese Koreans, disillusioned by the worsening economic conditions in North Korea, have switched their allegiance to South Korea. Many of the Chongryun's companies went bankrupt thus deepening economic hardship in the North.
- 12 The official view in the US is that their massive trade deficit with Japan and the NICs is not a result of fair market competition but of massive subsidies, industrial targeting and protectionism – all orchestrated by the states. Thus, Americans argue that Korea's surpluses with the United States since 1982 have resulted from its trade barriers and undervalued currency. In the face of the US trade and doctrinal assault, the Korean government is seeking to legitimize a positive role for an activist and protectionist state. From the Korean government's viewpoint, US trade deficits have followed on from faulty domestic policies while Korean liberalization is likely to help Japan rather than the United States since Japanese exports are more competitive than American exports despite yen revaluation.
- 13 There is a capitalist economic system that is prominently global in its operations. As we have observed, there are also different kinds of capitalist societies. Rather than a single, homogeneous system, there are different capitalisms with different capacities for reform and adaptation, co-existing with many social and political forms.
- 14 Haggard admits the exclusion of the working class in the East Asian NICs but argues that the authoritarian states are capable enough to solve the collective action problems that characterize state–labor and labor–management relations.
- 15 Until the late 1970s, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) discipline was still largely intact, East Asian countries benefited from a relatively open world trading system and world trade was also expanding.
- 16 Kang tried to avoid the state versus market formula and emphasizes the politics behind the economics. He pays more attention to the historical origins of Korean and Taiwanese capitalism and the significance of the international system in East Asian development.
- 17 Confucian culture provides institutions and traditions expedient to development such as meritocratic bureaucratic elite, legitimacy of an authoritarian government, centrality of the family, and collectivity and emphasis on education. Although we can find a certain common ground for the East Asian model, there is a wide range of diversity in cultural practice and social patterns in the region. Moreover, culture is a dynamic force that is transformed along with social, economic and political changes.
- 18 At this point, Metzger overcomes the weakness of Weber's argument on Confucianism: that is, Confucianism repressed instrumental economic organization. Weber argued that Confucianism lacked the inner dynamic to transform the world in a direction conducive to the take-off of modern rational capitalism. However, as Metzger points out, there are proximate causes of economic rationality and Confucianism can be a powerful source of motivation for fostering economic achievement.

- 19 Metzger finds the proximate causes of economic modernization in Taiwan in cultural homogeneity and a number of international and situational factors such as the relatively small size of the country, an infrastructure laid by the Japanese colonial government, US economic aid, and US diplomatic and military support, and the influx of administrative talent from the Mainland from 1949 onwards.
- 20 In this regard, it seems more appropriate to link the Chinese path to modernization to the Marxist–Leninist transcendental order than to Confucian tradition, because the Marxist–Leninist ideology provided cultural legitimacy to the communist state as a modern impersonal authority forming an uninhibited political center.
- 21 We can also take into account the Japanese colonial legacy as the proximate cause of economic modernization in both Koreas, which contributed to the creation of conditions where a bureaucratic stratum could emerge and consolidate itself in power.
- 22 Evans emphasizes the state's transformation role for capital accumulation (1995: 6). By industrial transformation, Evans means a shift of industrial production toward higher return and higher value-added activities that can provide local workers with a foundation for higher living standards. As Evans correctly observes, the transformation of the East Asian economies from low-productivity agrarian backwaters to the most rapidly growing industrial economies in the world is due to social capital built in the interstice between the state and society. He argues for 'synergy,' implying that 'civic engagement strengthens state institutions and effective state institutions create an environment in which civic engagement is more likely to thrive' (Evans 1996a: 1120).
- 23 The chronic corruption between bureaucrats and business in South Korea refutes Evans's argument on the developmental state; it can be seen as a kind of anarchic rent-seeking character of a predatory state. Within Evans's ideal model of embedded autonomy, we cannot explain the recent Korean economic crisis that reflects internal contradiction and arbitrariness.
- 24 Woo-Cumings (1996: 307–19) points out some flaws in Evans' 'embedded autonomy': his research is dependent on anecdotal evidence, lacks details of politics, fails to address the creation of credit, and underestimates the importance of the global, historical context of development. She defines the cases of Taiwan and South Korea as client states in the Cold War system, and attributes this fact to the reshaping of the economic structure into a coherent growth strategy enacted by both the states. Schwartz argues that Evans's notion of embedded autonomy is similar to a 'governance regime' (1996: 283–93). A governance regime can be adapted to the needs of a given sector depending on a variety of factors including asset specificity, the kind of learning and the scale of production. Evans's embedded autonomy of the developmental state is also time-, context-, and sector-bound. He notes that military interest is salient in the IT industry, which is why it is easy to prevent capture by other economic agencies. Schwartz criticizes Evans for underestimating the difficulty of transforming existing state institutions.

The Korean economic crisis: the end of a miracle or a turning point?

- 1 According to Krugman, East Asian NIC's growth was due mainly to ever-increasing amounts of labor and capital, rather than any rise in productivity, and so would eventually become unsustainable. He argues that there is no indication that externalities originated from supplier-industries, implying that Korean industrial expansion depended on imported inputs and technology. Although his argument corresponds to the World Bank report that nearly two-thirds of the growth between 1960 and 1989 reflects the accumulation of inputs rather than improvements in efficacy, South Korean growth of the last decade shows some improvement in efficiency.
- 2 The contagion effect (or tequila effect) is that a crisis of an exchange rate in one country contaminates other countries that have proximity and/or a similar level of economic development with a similar economic structure.

- 3 In a growing economy, driving growth was often based on debt-fuelled speculation in the real-estate sector rather than on investment to manufacturing and R&D. This made Korea's export-led development more vulnerable as global protectionism intensified. In the context of regional integration and globalization, South Korea is more than ever dependent on the capacity of world markets to continue export-fuelled growth. South Korea has severe imbalances in its macro-economy because of the very nature of growth strategies. Exports have far greater effects on the structure of the Korean economy, since its economic policies rely on trade strategies and imported technology. Korea's export niche needs to change and diversify.
- 4 IMF-sponsored structural adjustment programs began in the South during the 1970s and extended to the East in the 1990s with the transition in those countries from state socialism to a market-based economy. In the process, the IMF has grown in competence and resources and become a major site of economic governance including several major rescue operations since the mid-1990s (see Harold 1996). With regard to the IMF's bailout, however, some Koreans are bemoaning the loss of their 'economic sovereignty.'
- 5 While many South Koreans do not exclude the possibility that the structural reforms and liberalization prescribed by the IMF may contribute to the long-term performance of the Korean economy, imposing reforms when Korea was at its weakest led to the suspicion that the IMF was an institution in the service of the USA and Japan.
- 6 Clifford and Engardio (1999) identify the chaebol-government risk partnership as a source of cronyism and corruption. They attribute Asian business practices and crony ties to the economic crisis. For more nuanced explanation of Korea's government-business relationship, see Kang (2002) and McNamara (2002): Kang argues that corruption can be a function of growth and cronyism can reduce transaction costs and minimize deadweight losses in a unique government-business relationship in South Korea. McNamara characterizes Korea's government-business relationship as 'syncretic capitalism' that allowed for trust and constrained corruption, yet was flexible enough to adapt as the country's economy grew mature.
- 7 In this framework, the symbiotic relationship between the state and the chaebol is a distinguishing feature of South Korean late industrialization: the state provides the blue print; it controls the main levels of the economy through finance and investment; it encourages large corporations to be competitive and export oriented. The chaebol, in return for privileged protection and favored access to credit and markets, comply with the state plan and execute government directives.
- 8 In his conclusion Hobday finds some common denominators in the NICs and attributes their economic success to macroeconomic stabilization, outward looking, export-led industrial policy, an appropriate educational and technological infrastructure, and the promotion of the entrepreneurial classes by the state. At the same time, he notes conspicuous contrasts between them. According to the diversity of policy model, we can find important differences in industrial concentration, corporate ownership and strategy, patterns of innovation and the paths of industrial development among East Asian countries.
- 9 Although both countries have sound fundamentals, they have serious problems in their banking systems because of bad loans. In South Korea, the financial sector suffered from nonperforming debt as it did in Japan. The debt-equity ratio is even higher for Korean conglomerates than for Japanese *keiretsu* and the degree of industrial concentration in Korea is higher than in Japan. Whereas the Korean financial crisis resulted from huge foreign debts, the Japanese crisis came from huge domestic debts.
- 10 On this point Krugman's moral hazard argument has some explanatory power (Krugman 1998). Krugman emphasizes inefficiencies resulting from 'long-lasting' government protection and intervention into the market mechanism. The implication is that government guarantees to financial intermediaries and corporations led them to undertake excessively risky investments and to pursue over-investment, particularly in the boom period. Close cooperation between government and industry allowed the Asian countries

long-term planning and investment. However, such cozy relations not only give more flexibility but also are also vulnerable to corruption.

- 11 In that light, Chang in *Kicking away the ladder* lucidly explains the fact that today's developed countries did not develop on the policies and the institutions that they now recommend to, and often force upon, the developing countries (Chang 2003). He shows that it took the developed countries a long time to develop their present economic institution and that there is no single global standard institution.
- 12 In the early 1960s, the Park regime nationalized the banks and took charge of their lending. In the 1970s, Park ordered the banks to lend to favored industries at negative real interest rates. Park's financial policy gave rise to damaging inflation and the vastly indebted chaebol. Up to now, inflation and the bad loan problems have been suppressed without a radical reform of the banking system.
- 13 It is worth noting that until 1991 access to the domestic stock market for foreign investors was limited to indirect investment.
- 14 Here 'post-authoritarian regime of accumulation' refers to the period since the downfall of the military dictatorship.
- 15 The economic effectiveness of Korea's developmentalist state is not taken for granted. A plausible explanation for Korean economic transformation is based on the finding that Korea's rapid economic development resulted from state-led economic growth policy. However, it is difficult for the state to intervene in individual firms' economic activities because of the simultaneous change of 1990s internal and international environments. Given these new circumstances and Korea's dependence on the core state and capital, the state has also started to emphasize free market ideology.
- 16 The state has itself been involved in entrepreneurial activities such as a macroeconomic management device. State entrepreneurship is a result of a complex interaction among growth conditions, external dependency and the status of competing elite constituencies. To radically alter the way state enterprises operate, the government needs to adopt policies that discourage state interventionist approach to economic development. This involves not only the privatization of the key state enterprises but also changing the way the state attempts to influence economic activities through its numerous industrial and regulatory policies.
- 17 The problem with small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) financing is not how to expand the supply of funds, but how to build a market setting in which SMEs are able to raise funds. Under a regulated or monopolistic loan market, bank profits from loans to large corporations are larger than those from loan to SMEs (Cho 1994: 70–80).
- 18 Private firms have grown so used to being bailed out that their investment plans are unrestrained by caution. So far, the general rule in Korean economy is that firms would rein back on investment only if the government does not allow them. This is one of the main reasons why the South Korean government finds it difficult to avoid intervening in the economy.
- 19 As observed in the overall reform processes, the state intervention remains strong not only in chaebol reforms but also in capital–labor relations, promoting productivity and maintaining competitive advantage in the world market.
- 20 For instance, some of the draconian measures such as macroeconomic austerity policy have been more successful than structural reform policy. This is because austerity measures can be centrally imposed whereas the diverse structural reforms require more complex negotiating process among conflicting interests.
- 21 Economic reforms tried over the last ten years by the previous governments have failed due to the institutionalized coalition between business and governments. Fox raises a question about the role of state in economic expansion. She argues that the statist perspective tends to overstate the role of the interventionist state. Through a Marxist class analysis, she examines the changes of relations between the state and the large conglomerates (see Fox 1995).

- 22 Hoogvelt (1997) points out the inefficiency of the developmentalist state model in the globalizing world, where high-value and high-volume production are more effective than mass production to maintain competitiveness.
- 23 Drawing on Johnson's two models of state intervention, Weiss emphasizes 'how the government intervenes and for what purposes' (Johnson 1980: 18).
- 24 Weiss defines 'governed interdependence (GI) as a negotiated relationship in which public and private participants maintain their autonomy, yet which is nevertheless governed by broader goals set and monitored by the state' (1998: 38).
- 25 Legal barriers to the dismissal of workers served as an obstacle to such layoffs until 1998, when these barriers were seemingly overturned by middle-of-the-night legislation by the ruling party, but massive resistance forced a temporary rollback of the legislation. The recent capital-oriented restructuring has created massive unemployment; the government's own figures put the unemployment at 8 percent with 1.8 million people driven out of jobs after the economic crisis, but the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) analysis estimates the unemployment rate to be 17 percent with some 4 million people jobless (see Korean Confederation of Trade Unions 1999).
- 26 Holger criticizes Krugman's argument (referred to above) for seeing Asia's miracle from the perspective of 'bread-and-butter economic forces,' which dismisses the role of social and cultural factors in the dynamics of economic development.
- 27 Sang-jin Han sees rush-to modernization as a one-dimensional development that has pushed Korean society to take the risks of moral deprivation, technological miscalculations and environmental destruction. Reflexive modernization is seen as an alternative modernization whereby a society can re-examine its self-destructive tendencies and rectify the negative effects of the modernization process (For more detailed explanation of the notion of reflective modernity, see Beck 1994).
- 28 With regard to the environmental crisis, Eder points out conspicuous byproducts of Korea's condensed industrialization such as acid rain, air pollution, and disposal of solid wastes. He warns that 'long-range planning, coordination, consistency, enforcement, and a willingness to change three decades of environmental abuse will be the hard part' of undoing the consequences of economic development (Eder 1996: 169–70).

National identity nationalism, nation building in Korea

- 1 The development of nationalism often involves the secularization of religion, e.g. Islam to Arab nationalism, and Hinduism to Indian nationalism. The explicit linkage between nationalism and religion has been noticeable in Japanese nationalism as well: the combined character of the two factors has contributed to the successful modernization process as manifested in Shinto.
- 2 Ethnic nationalism can be seen as small-scale nationalism of nationality, not of a nation, unless the ethnic group has its own independent state.
- 3 Greenfeld refers the term, *ressentiment*, to 'a psychological state resulting from suppressed feelings of envy and hatred and the impossibility of satisfying these feelings' (1992: 15).
- 4 For Weber, the idea of the nation is a construct of intellectual strata who identify with the national culture that corresponds to their prestige interests.
- 5 According to Greenfeld, individualistic nationalism, as found in England and America, promotes liberalism and an attitude of national calculation, which together lead to democratic institutions. In contrast, collectivist (or ethnic) nationalism, as found in Germany and Russia, arises from a peripheral intelligentsia envious of superiority of external forces, which leads to authoritarian institutions. Another of her case studies, France, lies somewhere between the individualistic and collectivist poles.
- 6 Hobsbawm uses 'the invention of tradition' conceptually to indicate that phenomena, often seen as natural, are in fact deliberate constructions generated to foster group identity, legitimize authority and status structure, and inculcate certain sentiments.

- 7 As Castoriadis argues, the cultural core consists of the imaginary significations that embody social–historical creativity: the imaginary significations do not have to be confined to the certain form of institutions; sometimes, even the primordial becomes a system of signification.
- 8 Rejori and Enloe argue that Europe produced nation-states, whereas Asia and Africa have produced state-nations. They simply differentiate state and nation in saying that state is primarily a political–legal concept, whereas nation is primarily psycho-cultural. However, I think this is an over-generalization that ignores the dynamics of non-Western nationalism.
- 9 Korea is one of the ‘genuine’ nation-states in the sense of the term meaning one ethnos under the rule of its own state. Korea assumes a number of shared commonalities such as the same ethnic, a common language and a shared value system.
- 10 Korea has never been clearly declared as two nations, although the two different states have led to the establishment of different political and economic systems. Even in the North–South Agreement in 1992, when the two Koreas gained separate membership in the UN by recognizing the reciprocal existence, they prescribed a provisional relation rather than that of two independent nations to negotiate cooperation in the process of reunification.
- 11 There was another group of orthodox Confucian scholars known as ‘*wijong choksa pa*,’ which means “defend the legitimate teaching (Confucian ethic) and reject the false teaching (anything Western).” They were fundamentally reactionary, opposing any kind of social change that could disturb the status quo.
- 12 Opportunistic political leaders are seen as inventing or recreating and inflaming nationalisms to gain personal advantage in a shifting environment.
- 13 Cheondogyo, the Religion of the Heavenly Way, which was originally called Tonghak (literally means Eastern Learning), was founded in 1860. It is a religion unique to Korea and influenced to some extent by Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity. Cheondogyo ethics played a major role in modernization of Korean society by introducing the revolutionary ideas of basic human rights, such as equality, freedom and dignity. The Cheondogyo ideas of man and ethics became the ideological basis for the Tonghak uprising. Tonghak peasant rebellions have been interpreted as a social revolutionary upsurge in Korea and was seen as a turning point in modern Korean history, which signaled the end of the Choson dynasty and the dawn of modern society in Korea (see Kim 1978). Although we cannot deny the significant place of Tonghak peasant rebellions in the Korean nationalism discourse, the Tonghak leader’s conservative tendency in regard with the traditional monarchical system has been often dismissed in the nationalistic interpretation of history.
- 14 With regard to the peasant activism, Shin provides us with a comprehensive perspective to look at peasant struggle in colonial Korea. He focuses on the role of peasant and the historical structural conditions that made possible an effective land reform and the subsequent industrialization after liberation. Through his study of peasant activism, he argues that a long history of peasant protest paved the road to Korean modernity. The peasant class identity and national consciousness were not simply instilled by either nationalist or communist elites but were made by their daily struggles. Thus, he argues that ‘Korea from the 1920s to the 1940s witnessed not so much a Korean nationalist or communist peasant movements as a Korean peasants’ peasant movement’ (Shin 1996: 180).
- 15 Historically the global spread of capitalism depended on imperial nation-states, and what was widely disseminated in the colonies was also the concept of nation-state. In nationalist movements, a modern nation-state was imagined as a more egalitarian and independent community by making a link between nationhood and modernity or progress. Ironically, Korea was colonized by Japan not through conquest but by gradual resolution of international treaties, in which all countries are supposed to deal with each other on the basis of ‘equality’ and ‘reciprocity.’

- 16 For instance, nationalist historians such as Sin Chaeho, Choe Namson, Pak Unsik, tried to rewrite Korea's cultural traditions and history from a revisionist perspective focusing on its uniqueness (see Allen 1990; Robinson 1984).
- 17 The birth of *minjok* manifested in the appearance of its mythical progenitor, *Tangun*. If in China historians were rediscovering *Huangdi*, and in Japan the Meiji state had used *Amaterasu* to define the imperial line as the locus of official history, Korean history flowed from *Tangun* (see Schmid 1997). The term *tanil minjok*, meaning 'a single-blood race,' is used on the ground of the concept that all Koreans are common descendants of *Tangun*.
- 18 The 'March First Movement' was a non-violent, peaceful independent movement based on the principle of the self-determination of nations. It can be defined as a national social movement, which explains a special type of collective action that links to nationalism in the process of nation-state building (see Kim, Y. C. 1992).
- 19 Nationalist movement was encouraged by a few missionaries and led by a tiny Western-educated minority Christians. Christianity is taken to represent a powerful messianic message under the colonialism and served as a model of the nation. The role of the early missionaries in resisting the Japanese oppression and in modern education has a significant influence on the formation of a nationalist perspective.
- 20 Drawing on Gramsci's theory of hegemony, Park accounts for the formation of nationalism in terms of class struggle. Through the case of North China during the mid-1920s, she shows how nationalism and national identity can be constructed by different class interests (see Park 1994).
- 21 Wells distinguishes Christian nationalism from other nationalism, which gave priority to direct political activity by calling it a 'self-reconstruction' process focusing on cultural activities. As Wells points out, the Japanese attempts to pressure the Christian church over Shinto worship are the best known conflicts between the Protestant nationalists and the colonial government (1990: 141).
- 22 As Hyun Ok Park (1998) argues, anti-Communism in South Korea is not a product of Cold War ideological confrontation. It is rather a main colonial legacy that was reconstructed and reinforced through the Cold War ideology.
- 23 Crump (1996) accounts for a historical backdrop to the subtle relations between anarchism and nationalism in Korea. He argues that because of historical conditions (e.g. Japanese colonial experience, the division of nation by the US and the USSR, and anti-communist state policy) Korean anarchists were vulnerable to nationalist criticism and degenerated into nationalism.
- 24 There is a compromise between Korean nationalism and Marxism, since the traditional component of nationalism resisted transnational communism. Korean Marxism has been operative only within the structure of nation-state since the colonial period.
- 25 In this regard, Greenfeld notices that 'Democracy was born with the sense of nationality... Nationalism was the form in which democracy appeared in the world, contained in the idea of a nation as a butterfly in a cocoon' (1992: 10). Although democracy is not a specific product of the modern era, it has spread as a ubiquitous feature of modernity. Even though the foundations of the modern advanced nations were laid under non-democratic or very limited democratic conditions, they still drew their legitimacy for political policies and strategies from democracy.
- 26 In the book, *South Korea's Minjung Movement: the Culture and Politics of Dissidence*, Wells tries to deconstruct the *minjung* in terms of a 'cultural construction of Korean history' (1995: 12). He criticizes *minjung* historians or activists who fail to bring in a new notion of culture and, instead, resort to rigid Marxism-Leninism or the North Korean *juche* (self-reliance) ideology. What is most interesting is that the meaning and concept of *minjung* have been reformulated along with the change of the political and economic situations (Wells 1995: 1-9). The meaning of *minjung* as a cultural construction allows for various identities.

- 27 The recent local autonomy elections aimed at devolving the centralized political power to the localities.
- 28 Within an ethnically and culturally homogeneous country like Korea, loyalty to the state (patriotism) and nationalism can reinforce each other without conflict (see Gellner 1983: Chapter 9).
- 29 At this point, we can apply Weber's concept of patrimonialism to the traditional Korean state. With the lack of separation of individuality among the sovereignty, it shows a high level of political concentration. For example, in the Korean language, the Chinese characters used among the Korean ruling class, there is no notion of nation, but only of the state, *guk-ga*. In Confucian tradition, it was believed that to keep the state in order was to keep one's family in order. The family–state connection is well reflected in the term for *guk-ga* (state), which literally means state–family.
- 30 Globalization provides a new framework for communication and understanding between intercivilizational encounters, in which a new national imagery and institutional mechanism can emerge.

Reunification as a radical project of state formation

- 1 Here the contrast with other divided countries is important. Germany does not have a cultural legacy as homogeneous as that of Korea, but a unitary modern state existed before division. Vietnam is a case of uncompleted division: the South was never really a functioning state. There was a Communist takeover in a vacuum (1945) then a colonial war of re-conquest with the French trying to activate a civil war within the colonial one. And then, Americans taking over and making a more determined but unsuccessful attempt at the same thing. As for China, the double (historically and geographically – as a former Japanese colony and an inland province) status of Taiwan makes the whole situation incomparable with Korea. Therefore, the Korean unification problem is a unique one.
- 2 For example, South Korean governments have attempted to monopolize the reunification discourse and to manipulate the people's emotions with the rhetoric of national security. Similarly, the North Korean government has used the discourse of unification for propaganda purposes including the rationalization of their monopoly of political power.
- 3 Nicholas Eberstadt (1993) notes that economic development in the North has been greater than is generally imagined. Despite the devastation of the Korean War, North Korea's industry outperformed South Korea's industry for many years. He also continuously notes the surprising similarities in both demographic structure and economic geography between the North and the South.
- 4 I am of course not denying that many socialist countries started important economic reforms in the direction of a freer market by reducing central state controls on the economy and permitting individuals more autonomy in their economic activities since the 1990s. What I want to emphasize at this point is that despite their economic loosening, we cannot directly link the economic changes to political reform.
- 5 With regard to this point, Paik also correctly pointed out in his critique of Habermas's comparison of national unification in German and Korea that the nature of Korea's national division and the relations between the North–South Korea are different from those of the German case (Paik 1996).
- 6 Revolutionary forces existed in liberated Korea in 1945. The division of 'liberated' Korea by the allied powers left both sides divided over how to cope with the drastic division of the country. They struggled for unification but disagreed with not only tactics but also the overall strategy and end being sought. In the Cold War geopolitical situation, Korea found that the American 'liberators' only came to block the independence of Korea. To eradicate existing social organizations, the Americans re-armed the Japanese

to put down peaceful demonstrators calling for independence. This deprived the Koreans of any chance of reaching national consensus about unification. A sacrifice had to be made from the Korean side: the perpetuation of the division. As Yang explains, the distortion arises from the nature of the 'liberation.' Korea was not liberated by its own efforts, and hence Koreans had to play with the politics of their liberators and swim in the whirlpool of the two superpowers' rivalry (1994: 152). Then the ideological conflict escalated into direct military confrontation. Because of the traumatic experience of the civil war, most Koreans found themselves with deep scars of hatred and distrust. The nation was no sooner divided territorially and disrupted socially, than it started to treat the deeply wounded of national identity.

- 7 We need to understand the realities of the two Koreas, which have developed in different ways, and overcome communist ideological obfuscation. Information about the two Koreas that have developed so separately should be made available to the public so that they can understand the great differences between the two societies and seek to reconcile them. Different economic systems, ideologies, policies of reunification and undemocratic political structures have remained as barriers to reunification. In this regard, it seems important for the Koreans to be educated about the difference of the two regimes in both ideology and experience. Here Yang's explanation of the difference between the two Koreas' systems is useful (1994: 405–11). He contrasts party-state in North Korea to corporatism in South Korea. In party-state, the private economic sphere is marginal if it exists at all, while in corporatism there is a state-controlled partnership between government and all interest groups, especially business groups. In corporatism, however, key interest groups like the military can make it so costly for the state to resist their interests that a type of bargaining ensues. Nevertheless, this is hardly democracy, because the interests at issue are those of elite who often hold concurrent positions in the state structure. Groups that are not compliant have to be controlled or made dependent in other ways.
- 8 Building civil society is an attempt to define an alternative realm of political – a realm that is neither of the Party nor of the state and is not confined to the concerns of the private life of individuals. In the cases of East European states after 1989 where society had been atomized, individuals cowed and driven back into private life. The prevailing attitudes to politics were despair, cynicism, apathy, indifference and resignation. In the absence of the necessary intermediate structures, the new regimes have to institute autonomous centers of power that will act as a check on their own power (see Lewis 1990: 16–31).
- 9 As evidence, Kim Jung Il imported 100 Mercedes-Benz cars from West Germany in 1997 to distribute them to the political and military leaders.
- 10 For a comprehensive discussion of the North's unification policy, see Kim (1977).
- 11 Former President Kim Dae Jung proposed a more articulate 'Three-Stage' approach to Korean unification based on his perspective of sun shine policy: first stage of Korean confederation (one nation, two states, two governments) envisions a ten-year period of peaceful coexistence and institutionalization of inter-Korean exchanges; followed by second stage of a federal system (one nation, one state, two regions) where a central government conducts foreign relations and national defense whereas two regional governments handle internal issues; finally a central government with either integration of the two regions or federalization (Kim, D. J. 1997).
- 12 This formulation represents North Korea's changing concept of confederation from a transitional phase to final stage of unification in which two different social and economic systems can coexist; on the other hand, Kim Dae Jung's proposal of 'confederation of Korean republic' is a 'loose federal system' allowing both Koreas to be sovereign states with separate armies (see Harrison 1991: 314).
- 13 In this regard, Kim and Olsen describes the complexity of Korean situation as follows: 'Northeast Asia has one foot in the post-Cold-War world, but the other foot remains entangled in the legacy of the Cold War' (see Kim and Olsen 1996: 1).

- 14 In the Asia Pacific region multilateral economic and security cooperation is envisaged through such bodies as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).
- 15 The major impact of the Korean War on both East and West was that while it devastated the Korean peninsula, it helped the rapid rehabilitation of Japan and led to the development of the military-industrial relation in the USA. Above all, facing a Sino-Soviet alliance system in the region, the United States felt the need to build a strong alliance system focusing on Japan. With the Korean War, the United States launched global rearmament programs throughout the world.
- 16 Nothing dramatizes this point so well as the manner and extent to which Pyongyang managed to translate its nuclear brinkmanship – what came to be known as the first nuclear crisis of the post-Cold-War era in the wake of Pyongyang's threatened withdrawal in March 1993 from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty – into a diplomatic breakthrough (the new American connection) in late 1994.
- 17 The issue on the Korean peninsula revolves around the question of how to defuse the Korean time bomb by initiating the process of arms reduction and conflict resolution. From a positive point of view, the Korean peninsula is the one place in East Asia where European-style confidence-building measures seem relevant. This is so because in Korea, as in Europe, heavily armed ground forces confront each other across a clearly demarcated land border. With the progress in North-South Korean dialog, it is possible to arrange for an arms-control regime. From a negative perspective, tensions and dangers persist on the Korean peninsula. It is well known that the security environment in Asia, unlike the situation in Europe, is rather diffused and difficult to address.
- 18 Simon argues: '...while the Cold War era in Asian politics has ended, the millennium has not yet arrived. New maritime conflicts inherent in exclusive economic zones' claims over islands and seabed resources, and potential subregional political arrangements all portend the continuation of security dilemmas in Asia's future' (Simon 1993: 10). Calder deals with this in a broader context. He argues that explosive economic development, lack of energy and rapid armament are three interrelated issues in East Asia forming a deadly triangle threatening Asia Pacific security. Calder calls Northeast Asia an 'arc of crisis,' which is the most potentially dangerous area with forces from three nuclear powers and four near nuclear powers in close proximity in an area with two divided countries (Calder 1996: 13–42).
- 19 With regard to North Korea's strategic foreign policy, it seems useful to remember Levin's definition of 'strategic relations' as 'those a nation has with states that have the capability to favorably or adversely affect its fundamental national interest, particularly as it relates to national security' (Levin 1990: 44).
- 20 Given the proximity of Seoul (barely 50 kilometers from the DMZ), the North has the tantalizing option of a sudden attack upon Seoul, where a quarter of South Korea's population and more than half of its economic activity are concentrated.
- 21 Moon does not believe that the regional powers are particularly interested in conventional arms control on the Korean peninsula, although the same cannot be said for nuclear arms. He admits that the US perhaps has the most interest among the big powers, and has the leverage to shove the arms control process. Focusing his attention on the two Korean states, Moon claims that the European experience is not applicable to the Korean peninsula due to significant situational and contextual differences.
- 22 In the same context, it is useful to call to mind Yang's interpretation of the reasons that drive any arms race. Yang cites two that are particularly relevant to Korea: 'the ideological tradition that rejects compromise and coexistence, and the vested interests of the opposing militaries within their respective societies.' He argues that dialog has to be the eventual path to lessening tensions in Korea. However, as we have seen so often, progress toward lesser tension threatens factions with vested interests in the conflict. In the absence of any reasonable alternative they have to keep trying to sabotage peace efforts.

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