

The Political Economy of the Small Welfare State in South Korea. By JAE-JIN YANG. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017. 249pp. \$99 (hardcover)

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There is growing scholarly and policy interest in South Korea (henceforth Korea) in part because the nation is a model for other rapidly industrializing nations in Asia, such as China. As a consequence, Korea has become an increasingly interesting subject of study for social scientists, especially for scholars of social policy and welfare states.

Korea is well-recognized in the scholarly literature as a nation experiencing compressed modernity starting from the mid-1960s. A well-developed literature that began in the 1980s focuses on Korea's economic development and the rise of an export-focused economy. This writing has continued, and most recently has extended to the export of Korean culture via the 'Korean wave' or Hallyu. A second, stream of literature emerged in the mid-1990s on the socio-political implications of rapid industrialization, urbanization, and democratization. This literature examines aspects of the transformation of Korean society, including the creation of the welfare state. It is to the second stream that *The Political Economy of the Small Welfare State in South Korea* by Jae-jin Yan makes a significant and timely contribution.

At the core of the book is a puzzle: Why is the role of the government in protecting the health and well-being of its citizens so small in Korea relative to the overall wealth and economic progress of the nation? In other words, why, after more than half a century of industrialization and after decades of democratic rule, along with a strong labor movement and a centralized state bureaucracy (and one might add a homogeneous culture), is Korea's welfare state stunted? Yang's contribution to unravelling the puzzle is three-fold. First, the book provides a holistic and up-to-date overview of the rise of Korea's welfare state. In contrast to most of the literature, which is narrowly focused and segmented, Yang's sweep is broad and displays a mastery of key events, institutions, and individuals since the 1960s. For this reason alone, the volume is essential for anyone wishing to learn about the past trajectory of Korea's social protection programs.

Second, the book offers a critique of the 'usual suspects' used to account for the underdevelopment of the Korean welfare state: Confucianism, productivism, and developmentalism. Yang shows that although these explanations have useful elements and insights, they fail to provide adequate explanation for decades-long trends. Rather, Yang focuses—in what is his third contribution to the literature—on the role that institutions, and institutional legacies, have played in shaping the evolution and stagnation of the welfare state. That is, there is a path of dependency that has—notwithstanding economic, political, and other changes—guided and constrained the development of welfare policies in Korea.

Yang concentrates on three institutions as central in shaping the past 50 years of Korean welfare state history. First, political institutions, including political parties, elections, the legislature, and the powers vested in the powerful but term-limited president. These institutions acting sometimes separately and sometimes in concert with others (such as the large employers that dominate the economy) had strong incentive to abort extensive welfare reform. Second, enterprise unionism, which resulted in a labor movement that primarily sought to maximize the welfare of its own members, rather than seeking broader protections for all citizens. Third, Yang examines the role of economic and finance ministries, which acted as brakes on proposals for welfare expansion by arguing that a larger welfare state is unaffordable.

The core of the book—and its strongest original contribution—traces how the institutional impediments operated at different times, such as during the rapid industrialization of the 1970s,

the democratization of the 1980s, the economic shocks and political shifts of the late 1990s, and various unsuccessful efforts to create and/or expand social programs in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. The volume is at its best when considering and explaining the unique features of the Korean case during these decades. Although some of the comparative material—examining Korea in the context of other OECD nations—is helpful and necessary in the early chapters, there is less value added later in the volume, when the analysis has made obvious that Korean institutional arrangements and dynamics are unique.

Yang is pessimistic in his conclusion, seeing little hope for significant welfare state expansion. The recent ouster of right-leaning president Park Geun-hye via citizen protests, and replacement with (for Korea) a left-leaning Moon Jae-in would seem to be a source of optimism that substantial social policy reform can occur. However, as the book compellingly shows, political change has had little impact on the welfare state in the past, given that power is rooted in institutions and in the interaction of institutions. On the other hand, as Korean scholars well know, there are examples of rapid change in the country, so it is not impossible to imagine a realignment of institutional pressures that result in a permanent break of existing institutional coalitions. Perhaps rapid population ageing or declining fertility will prove triggers, and indeed the latter has already resulted in the creation and expansion of social programs related to child care that seemed unimaginable 10 or 15 years ago. Of course, other scenarios are possible as well. Nonetheless, Yang's view of the future—based on his meticulous research and close attention to the past—is at the moment the most reasonable.

In summary, the book is a convincing account, both explanatory and full of details and up-to-date empirical data, of the enigma of Korea's small welfare state. A must-read for anyone wishing to apprehend the Korea of today and yesterday, and to contemplate its future.

Promoting Development: The Political Economy of East Asian Foreign Aid. By BARBARA STALLINGS and EUN MEE KIM. Singapore: Palgrave, 2017. 271 pp. \$99.00 (e-book)

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Foreign aid has re-gained the attention of a wide and diverse scholarship lying at the intersection of political economy, finance, development studies, geopolitics, and international relations. This is due to the growing presence of non-mainstream providers within a foreign aid system historically dominated by Western donors. These rising actors differ from traditional ones because they are not Western/high-income nations, and because they act outside the normative framework which has supposedly governed foreign aid disbursements for decades.

In the book under review, Stallings and Kim look at the foreign aid policies of three of these actors—Japan, South Korea, and China—focusing on the economic model that characterizes their behavior as donors. The book's main conclusion is that the aid performance of these donors presents a set of relevant and peculiar features that can be summarized as the "East Asian model of aid." This places them as a *unicum* within the donors group, as well as grants their foreign aid a high level of effectiveness.

The book is a rich addition both to the literature on foreign aid *per se* and to the ongoing debate on non-traditional aid. First, it offers a comprehensive analysis of the foreign aid policy of three non-mainstream donors: China, Japan, and South Korea. The study of Japanese and South Korean aid policies is particularly useful. While China's "South–South partnership" program