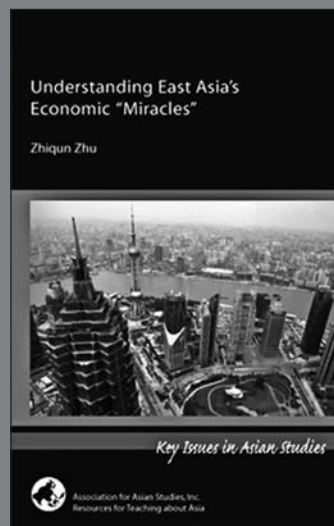


Understanding East Asia's Economic "Miracles"

A Brief Interview with *KIAS* Author Zhiqun Zhu



Key Issues in Asian Studies (KIAS) booklets complement *Education About Asia* and are practical teaching resources for college, university, and senior high school teachers and students. Zhiqun Zhu is John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Chair in East Asian Politics and an Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. His recent publications include *US-China Relations in the 21st Century: Power Transition and Peace* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), and *Global Studies: China*, 13th edition (Dubuque, IA: McGraw-Hill, 2009).



Lucien: *What are some reasons you decided to write a KIAS booklet on the post-war rise of East Asia's economies?*

Zhiqun Zhu: Right after World War II, and even during the 1950s and early 1960s, most East Asian economies were at about the same development level as countries in Africa and Latin America. One has to be amazed by how East Asia has been transformed in just a few decades. East Asia has been serving as a growth engine for the global economy. Today, East Asia boasts some of the largest economies and trading nations in the world. Even if Africa and Latin America have also developed in the past few decades, comparatively speaking, East Asia's rapid growth is absolutely stunning, and the gap between East Asia and other developing regions seems to be widening.

It is interesting and important to understand how East Asia as a region has developed so fast. Now the world's attention is on China, a late developer in East Asia, but a dominant force in today's global economy. Since Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan are all democracies now, one wonders whether China will follow a similar path and democratize after its economy has taken off.

Many books have been published on East Asia's post-war economic and political transformations. However, as a professor of international relations with a focus on East Asia, I've always felt frustrated by being unable to find introductory materials on East Asia's political economy—a book that is concise yet thorough and not theory-laden in its analysis of East Asia's economic growth and political development.

I was extremely pleased to read the AAS Call for Proposals for new titles in the KIAS series a couple of years ago. Out of my own teaching interests and needs, and with an ambition to contribute to education about East Asia, I developed a proposal and sent it to you, Lucien, the

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new editor of KIAS. I am glad that you liked it and encouraged me to proceed.

Lucien: *What did you learn as you developed this work of pedagogical scholarship intended for broad audiences?*

Zhiqun Zhu: Writing this booklet has truly been a self-improvement process. From the very beginning, I have had a broad audience in mind. I hope the booklet will be useful for introductory courses at the college level and at the senior high school level, as well as for others who are interested in East Asia.

What I've learned most in writing the booklet is that although it's a small book, it required no less research effort, and it was not easy to write. I was used to writing more "scholarly" stuff—more theoretically grounded research papers. To write an easy-to-understand booklet for a broad audience is a challenge. The book is still theory-inspired, but I avoided excessive focus upon the theory. Instead, I attempted to illustrate major trends through straightforward evidence—based on descriptions and subsequent analyses, and a multi-perspective approach—to try to explain why East Asia has been successful. I also developed a glossary of abbreviations, a timeline of modern East Asian history, and an extensive bibliography to enhance the pedagogical value

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of the booklet. With the help of AAS Publications Manager Jon Wilson, I added some photos that reflect East Asia of yesterday and today, so that readers can see the sharp contrasts. There are also descriptions of important leaders of these Asian nations throughout the booklet to help engage readers.

Lucien: *How will teachers and students in other academic disciplines, besides political science, benefit from your booklet?*

Zhiqun Zhu: This booklet is a multidisciplinary attempt to account for economic and political developments in East Asia after WWII. No single factor alone can explain East Asia's success. East Asia's "miracles" have to be understood holistically. I study East Asia in the larger context of world history, world politics, international economics, domestic politics and society, and individual leadership. I hope this jargon-free booklet will be very useful in survey-level college courses in political science, political economy, economics, history, Asian studies, cultural studies, political geography, and other Asia-related courses. Teachers and students at high schools, especially those teaching or taking advanced placement courses in world history, world politics, economics, and comparative government and politics, should also find the booklet very appropriate and helpful. ■

Understanding East Asia's Economic "Miracles"

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"Concise yet comprehensive, Zhiqun Zhu's booklet is the perfect introduction to the political economy of East Asia for undergraduate and advanced high school classes. Zhu's analysis of the economic 'miracles' of Japan, South Korea, China and Taiwan takes into account both domestic factors and the international environment, and is sensitive to the similarities as well as differences between the developmental experiences of these nations. Zhu raises important related issues such as the connections between economic development and democratization, the relative economic contributions of the state and the market, and the portability of the East Asian developmental model. A glossary of abbreviations, timeline, and extensive bibliography add to the pedagogical values of this booklet."

Robert Y. Eng
Professor of History
University of Redlands
ASIANetwork Board of Directors

"In this succinct and elegant book, Zhiqun Zhu shows how East Asian economies have taken different paths to economic success despite some shared features. East Asia's diverse but dynamic experience is valuable precisely because it demonstrates that developing nations need not follow a single approach to prosperity. An excellent book to assign for courses on Asia."

Ming Wan
Director, Global Affairs Program
Professor of Government and Politics
George Mason University