

The IMF and Global Dispossession

An annotated bibliography

Nathan Kim

Primary Sources

Kohler, Horst. "IMF Managing Director Congratulates Korea on Early Repayment of 1997 Stand-By Credit." The International Monetary Fund, August 22, 2001. <https://archivescatalog.imf.org/Details/ArchiveExecutive/125150694>.

Korea received a loan from the IMF in December of 1997 and repaid it by 2001, earlier than the required deadline of 2005. Managing Director Horst Kohler congratulated South Korea for this in the above document. Kohler specifically notes that the relationship between the IMF and Korea "has been exemplary and in many respects serves as a model for other countries," which is fairly interesting given the mass protests in South Korea to IMF takeover and the criticism of then-President Kim Dae-Jung of opening the economy for foreign investment. It also quite explicitly characterizing the relationship I noted in my project proposal of Korea as a nation of "model modernity." Through statements like these, Korea is made into an ideal to which other developing nations can aspire to, and upon failure this standard can be used to castigate those nations.

"Statement by Mr. Zamani on Thailand EBM/98/97." 1998. <https://archivescatalog.imf.org/Details/ArchiveExecutive/125135004>.

This is another resource from the IMF, a short memo from the Executive Board Meeting of the IMF in August 2nd, 2002. The memo specifically covers the recovery of Thailand, in which the crisis began and was one of the hardest-hit countries. This source serves as a comparison point in showing that the IMF staff definitely use much tamer language to describe the crisis in Thailand than in South Korea, i.e. South Korea's situation is a "model" but Thailand is simply "acceptable." But this source individually doesn't offer as much for my theoretical argument compared to the above source. For the most part, I hope to use many sources like these to gain context and quotable figures to use in my thesis.

Republic of Korea, Economics Bureau of the. “Fiscal Reform Under the IMF System,” December 20, 1998. <http://theme.archives.go.kr/viewer/common/archWebViewer.do?bsid=200041020104&gubun=search>.

This is an example of a resource from the Korean national archives, from the “IMF era” that stretched roughly from 1998-2005. Most of the writing here is fairly technical material that discusses policy changes made after December 1997. There are sections of the report that note with some caution the increasing proportion of foreign-held bonds, and the introduction does have a patriotic turn by discussing the duty of the Economic Bureau to serve the nation of South Korea. But in general, this is a statistical report that is I think will be necessary for my project (to actually tell the events and details of the financial crisis), but is not wholly central for my theoretical arguments. Tangentially, resources like these made me realize I need to spend some time setting up a hosting platform, an OCR tool, and a translation tool to go through these texts much more quickly.

“Issues of the Chosun Ilbo.” The Chosun Ilbo, January 1997–December 1999. <https://newslibrary.naver.com/viewer/index.nhn?publishDate=1997-01-01&officeId=00009&pageNo=1>.

This is one of many issues archived by the Naver News Library¹ from the Chosun Ilbo, which is one of the leading newspapers in the country and the oldest daily newspaper of Korea. Newspapers like these will complement the administrative records of the IMF and Korean government to provide a glimpse of Korean society in the Asian financial crisis. One snippet from the December 4th, 1997 issue of the Chosun Ilbo is shown below. This issue was released one day after the IMF loan agreement was signed, and the main headline reads “\$550 Billion Loan Package Approved.” The main text of this article is wholly approving of the IMF. It also includes a few words of praise for President Kim Dae-Jung, which is unexpected given the Chosun Ilbo’s conservative leaning and Kim Dae-Jung’s famous (left) activist background (he was even kidnapped by the Korean CIA and imprisoned for five years for protesting right-wing dictator Park Chung Hee).

Secondary Sources

Cumings, Bruce. *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947*. Yulsabipyungsa, 1981. <https://books.google.com?id=3hJyAAAAMAAJ>.

Bruce Cumings’ *Origins of the Korean War* is a foundational text in academic studies of the Korean Peninsula. At the time of its publication, the mainstream narrative of the Korean War assumed that it

¹For reference, Naver is sort of like the Google of South Korea, in that it is a tech company that does a billion different things but mostly makes profits from ads.

550억달러 지원

정부-IMF 어제 최종 합의

이르면 내일 100억달러 들어와



◇의향서 전달 임창열 부총리(오른쪽)가 3일 자신이 서명한 IMF 구제금융신청 의향서를 미셸 캉드쉬 국제통화기금(IMF) 총재에게 넘겨주면서 악수를 하고 있다. <광동취재단>

성장률 3%·물가 5%내로 축소
외국인 주식취득을 50%로 확대
금융개혁법안 연내 처리하기로

IMF이사회 거쳐 구체적조건 발표

IMF(국제통화기금)가 극복을 위해 IMF는 3일 한미 양국 의향에 세계은행 등 국제금융기관과 협의할 예정이다.

구와 미국 양국은 3일 IMF에 50억달러의 차관 지원키로 합의했다.

3黨후보「이

불격 유지”
박판반영

IMF선...수

정부는 IMF와 회담 합의했다. IMF는 3일 한미 양국 의향에 세계은행 등 국제금융기관과 협의할 예정이다. IMF는 3일 한미 양국 의향에 세계은행 등 국제금융기관과 협의할 예정이다. IMF는 3일 한미 양국 의향에 세계은행 등 국제금융기관과 협의할 예정이다.

Figure 1: A clipping from December 4th, 1997 issue of the Chosun Ilbo.

began with North Korea invading South Korea in 1950 in a near-unprovoked attack. Cumings pushed back on this by arguing that 1) the War really began with the arbitrary separation of the Korean peninsula by the U.S. in 1945, and 2) violence of the Korean War did not begin in 1950, because of cross-border fighting and uncountably many lives lost from massacres in South Korea by the South Korean and U.S. armies. This narrative was a revisionist one that was treated with skepticism by other scholars of Korea, but due to his sheer massive amount of research it has made its way into the canon of Korean history.² I don't actually plan on talking much about the Korean War in my thesis, given that the majority of its fighting occurred fifty years before the Asian financial crisis, but I do hope to use Cumings' arguments as starting points or "givens" for my analyses. South Korea was from the start born from U.S. violence and its position in the global political economy in 1998 would have been very different had not the United States assisted in massacres of activists fighting for economic egalitarianism in the 1940s and 50s.³

Moon, Seungsook. *Militarized Modernity and Gendered Citizenship in South Korea*. Duke University Press, 2005. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822387312>.

Seungsook Moon's *Militarized Modernity* is another text in contemporary history of Korea, discussing gender in South Korean society in the 1980s and early 1990s. She explores gender as a state project, focusing on South Korea's "draft culture" and how gender divides are reified and seen as necessary for state security. The draft for men (or some idea of "men") was seen as necessary and has never been seriously challenged, and South Korean society uses this position to give special benefits for men in the workplace as "rewards" for going through the draft. This also heightened the gender divide as women were pushed into factory jobs while men were often given managerial work. Feminists and labor union activists fought against this. This issue was central to the 1987 "June Struggle" that led to what is now acknowledged as the formal democratization of South Korea. Moon, centers her study on the years immediately before and after South Korea's "democratization" in 1987. Like Cumings' work, this is not exactly my period of study, but I hope to use her arguments as starting points for my own. She also has a higher emphasis on interviews and almost ethnographic data (she lived through this era), allowing her

²Actually massive! The first volume of *Origins* is some 600 pages and the second is almost 1000 pages. He also published many more histories of Korea after this.

³Addendum: I like Bruce Cumings a lot as a scholar for this kind of perspective and work. Professor Ria Chae gave a comparison last year of Cumings to Carter Eckert, another famous/foundational scholar of Korean history in the United States. They're both very successful academically, having endowed chairs at the University of Chicago and Harvard. And both began their interest in Korea from being deployed to Korea as part of the Peace Corps draft. But while Carter Eckert mostly stuck to his duties, Cumings often left his post to join protestors of then-dictator Park Chung Hee and hosted organizers in his home. He was also an early member of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars that was formed in opposition to the U.S. war in Vietnam and in solidarity with liberation movements of the Third World. A lot of this personal history is reflected in the kind of history he writes, which seeks to deconstruct U.S. aggression and highlight Korean resistance to this aggression. Not to idolize a tenured white male scholar, but yes, I hope my own study is on a trajectory closer to Cumings' than Eckert's.

not only to deconstruct high-level state reports but also how individual people felt about the draft and gender. I hope to extend this analysis of the *culture* of the South Korean economy in my own work.

Harvey, David. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

David Harvey's *The New Imperialism*, and especially the third chapter "Accumulation by Dispossession", is a major theoretical departure point for my thesis and a touchstone for contemporary American studies. He extends Rosa Luxemburg's and Marx's view of capital accumulation and primitive accumulation to the contemporary age. Luxemburg and Marx argued that capitalism fundamentally must expand and continue to grow in a process known as *primitive accumulation*, and points where it cannot grow due to a lack of resources results in a crisis as "bubbles" pop and capitalist economies reorganize themselves. Marx also argued that this process is nowhere near "natural" and has its beginnings in truly violent actions like land appropriation, war, colonialism, and slavery that led to "differences" in economic capital. Harvey combines these two views for the neoliberal age to argue that capitalism today not only relies on violence at its beginning (as "primitive" accumulation might suggest), but is continually violent because it constantly expands and collapses in on itself to support itself in the neoliberal age. To say it in another way, capital accumulation is not only a process of economic violence, but also of social and physical violence. He terms this *accumulation by dispossession*.

This is another one of those texts that is near-impossible to talk about in studies of neoliberal economics, but it's especially relevant to my thesis because of Da Silva and Chakravartty's critique of it, as explored below.

Chakravartty, Paula, and Denise Ferreira da Silva. "Accumulation, Dispossession, and Debt: The Racial Logic of Global Capitalism—An Introduction." *American Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (2012): 361–85. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23273527>.

Da Silva and Chakravartty acknowledge Harvey's study as a foundational and necessary one, but critique it for its treatment of race in accumulation by dispossession. Harvey only notes the disproportionate impact of accumulation by dispossession on people of color, almost treating race as a coincidental axis along which economic consequences occur. Ironically, even as he tries to push back on the violence of "primitive accumulation" as only occurring at the early stages of capitalist economies, he relegates race to a "primitive" status which modern capitalist forces use to function. Da Silva and Chakravartty push back on this by exploring how race and accumulation by dispossession co-constitute each other, and the violence that creates race is the same violence that leads to capital accumulation.

My thesis in turn acknowledges their view as generative but still incomplete. While framed as a study of global capitalism and arguing that “race as the *naturalized* ways U.S. Americans deploy the term cannot be the privileged and sole critical descriptor” of the various manifestations of the logics of dispossession on the “others of Europe,” still stops short of studying dispossession across the globe. Their collection does not touch on relationships between or across nations, institutions that drive these processes forth, or how the crises they discuss manifest elsewhere. My project will attempt to complement to their discussion by discussing debt and raciality as global concepts. This turn in scope will also hopefully focus on other areas they touch on but ultimately do not explore – the role of the colony/postcolony/colonizer, and the role of racial logic in globalization.

Eichengreen, Barry. *Exorbitant Privilege: The Rise and Fall of the Dollar and the Future of the International Monetary System*. Oxford University Press, 2011. <https://books.google.com?id=TIlpAgAAQBAJ>.

Barry Eichengreen’s book discusses the history of the dollar (or what some refer to as “dollar hegemony”) in the 20th century. The term “exorbitant privilege” comes from the former French Minister of Finance Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, who was criticizing the U.S.’ control of the international reserve system. Because the U.S. was a political and economic powerhouse after World War II, it was able to insist on the American dollar being pegged to gold at the Bretton Woods conference in 1944 that established the IMF. Other countries had to deal in either gold or the dollar. This was meant to move the global economy away from just gold, but in reality this position gave the U.S. an undisputed financial ruling position, codified into international law until the Nixon shock actions of 1971. This allowed the U.S. to simply print more dollars in cases of financial crisis that required foreign assistance, while other countries had to make one thousand more chairs or loaves of bread and so on to gather the same amount of funds. Today, although the Nixon shock ended that system, the U.S. dollar holds incredible power.⁴

My paper is not about the “dollar hegemony,” but I do feel like the IMF’s role in enforcing this through its reserve funds is important history to note in my background.

Lee, Catherine H. “To Thine Ownself Be True: IMF Conditionality and Erosion of Economic Sovereignty in the Asian Financial Crisis.” *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International*

⁴One interesting example occurred in 2016 with the French bank BNP Paribas, for dealings with the U.S.-sanctioned countries Cuba, Sudan, and Iran. BNP Paribas faced a fine of \$9 billion, the largest fine ever against a bank; such a fine from the United States was only possible because international banks must deal in the dollar currency to remain viable. It’s ridiculous to me that the U.S. could enforce its own sanctions by punishing a bank from another country, because of its financial power. See Neil Irwin, “In BNP Paribas Case, an Example of How Mighty the Dollar Is,” *The New York Times*, July 1, 2014, sec. The Upshot, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/03/upshot/the-dollars-big-role-in-foreign-policy.html>.

Economic Law 24 (2003): 875. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/upjtel24&id=885&div=&collection=>.

This resource provides a good overview on the history of the IMF leading up to the crisis, but it will be most useful for me for its discussion on South Korea and policies of conditionality that the IMF imposed. It criticizes the IMF for using a “Mexico-style” bailout in Korea, meaning the fiscal reforms applied were those of tightening debt, closing banks, requiring existing banks to be put up for foreign takeover. The IMF even required Korea to open its domestic market to Japanese cars and other products, which the Korean government had been in staunch opposition of due to Japan’s war crimes and colonial oppression in the first half of the 20th century. It’s also practically useful for me as I am still in the beginning of the research process, because it’s an English-language source specific to Korea’s involvement, and has tons of citations I can follow with lengthy footnotes that add commentary on each.

Martin-Jones, David. “Decompressing Modernity: South Korean Time Travel Narratives and the IMF Crisis.” *Cinema Journal* 46, no. 4 (2007): 45–67. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30137719>.

This is probably one of the more interesting secondary sources I’ll use for this project. David Martin-Jones analyzes the South Korean films *Calla*, *Ditto*, and *2009: Lost Memories* in this article, which are all produced in the so-called “IMF era” of 1997-2002. All three of these films involve time travel from present to past (also in the future, for *2009*), giving chances for historical reflection and commentary. Martin-Jones argues that though South Korea has experienced a “compressed modernity” period from rapid development in the late 20th century, the financial crisis of 1997 induced a sudden “pause” in development⁵ akin to the pause for reflection allowed by time travel at the center of these films. Topics of reflection stretch from gender roles and laws around gender-based employment, to new technology, to the independence of the youth. These are all used to push a sort of new conservatism and chastise the younger generation, a pattern that Martin-Jones argues took hold during the ambiguity of the IMF crisis.

I’m not actually sure if I buy his argument yet, as the specific relationship of the IMF involvement with Korea is sort of justified with a hand-wavy explanation. I still hope to use this article and the sources he mentions to study culture surrounding the IMF economic crisis.

⁵A really large euphemism here, given millions of people lost their jobs.