



Book Review

Book Review: Jin, D. Y. (2023). *Global South Discourse in East Asian Media Studies*

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The book *Global South Discourse in East Asian Media Studies* presents eight chapters that examine the increasingly complex and globally influential landscape of media and cultural production in East Asia. At a time when East Asian media industries have gained substantial transnational influence, the book identifies the limitations of dominant theoretical traditions that have historically framed the region as peripheral to global media developments (Miike, 2014; Shome, 2019). Rather than accepting these frameworks as analytically sufficient, the volume questions whether Western-centric paradigms can fully capture the geopolitical, cultural, and digital dynamics that shape media development in East Asia.

The author, Dr. Dal Yong Jin, argues for a broader conceptual shift in how media systems in East Asia are understood. As a leading scholar of global media and digital platform studies, he presents this volume as a distinctive contribution that repositions East Asia within Global South discourse. Importantly, he incorporates economically advanced countries such as Japan, South Korea, and China into this Global South discourse, highlighting their complex position as both participants in and challengers of Western-centered dominance.

This volume therefore positions East Asian media studies not merely as a regional focus but as a site of theoretical intervention with implications for global media scholarship. It suggests that East Asian media research should contribute to rethinking the global media flows, digital infrastructures, and cultural power through the lens of the non-Western world. In this view, the Global South includes East Asia as a region that redefines its relationship with Western influence by building its own digital ecosystems and cultural identity. The following sections outline how each chapter develops and substantiates this central argument.

Mapping the Global South in East Asia

Chapters 1 and 2 explore the historical formation of media systems and popular culture in East Asia while examining East Asia as an emerging media power and redefining it as a matter of geopolitical and cultural positionality rather than an economic status alone (Shome, 2019). As East Asian popular culture has expanded its global influence, the author argues that existing research frameworks are no longer sufficient to account for this transformation. This is because much of the earlier scholarship has often viewed East Asia as a regional case within established theoretical traditions (Miike, 2014). In response, the author calls for an East Asia-focused approach and views the region as a site of cultural production and theoretical innovation, rather than just following others. By reassessing the development of media industries and popular culture in the region, these chapters call for a more context-sensitive framework. Taken together, these chapters shift our view of the Global South from a group of developing economies to a set of influential cultural forces that help drive the global media landscape.

Chapter 3 extends this argument by examining hybridization and cultural identity in Japan and South Korea based on postcolonial discussions of hybridity (Bhabha, 1994; Garcia-Canclini, 1995). In particular, this chapter contends that hybridization in East Asia should not be understood as a simple blending of global and local elements. Instead, it should be understood as a strategic cultural process shaped by political and historical relationships (Bhabha, 1994). For example, while Japan initially succeeded globally by making its culture less obvious and more accessible to global audiences to enjoy their content about Japanese popular culture (Iwabuchi, 2004), South Korea has emphasized local specificity and its own cultural meaning in its global expansion (Jin, 2016). This comparison indicates that cultural production in East Asia

operates as a site where identity, power, and representation are actively negotiated rather than passively absorbed from dominant centers; for example, the interaction between Korean cinema and Hollywood demonstrates this dynamic negotiation (Klein, 2008). Through these contrasting strategies, the chapter demonstrates that hybridity takes different forms in Japan and South Korea depending on national context.

Regional Expansion and Digital Platforms

Chapters 4 and 5 examine cultural regionalization through the case of Japan. Although geographically located within the Global South framework, Japan occupies a complex position as a partly Global North actor due to its historical Westernization and advanced economic development in transnational cultural flows (Iwabuchi, 2002). The chapters show how Japan's unique culture and media industries began the first regional trends, which later led to setting the stage for broader East Asian cultural expansion through co-production strategies (Jin & Lee, 2012). Furthermore, building on the foundation of a strong and stable economy, the growing presence of Japanese and South Korean popular culture demonstrates how diverse forms of East Asian media production reach and connect diverse audiences across other non-Western regions such as China, Singapore, and Thailand as well as the Global North (Thussu, 2018). These shifts point to a reconfiguration of regional cultural flow beyond center-periphery models (Jin & Lee, 2012; Otmazgin, 2018). Instead, these chapters highlight the tensions, negotiations, and evolving dynamics that shape cultural regionalization across the region.

In addition, Chapters 6 and 7 examine the digital transformation. The rise of media platforms in East Asia such as Naver, Kakao, LINE, and TikTok is examined as part of a broader restructuring of global media infrastructures. Instead of viewing these platforms simply as technological tools, the

author emphasizes their role in supporting the rapid spread of regional popular culture across national and transregional boundaries. This development highlights the potential growing structural presence of East Asian platforms in global media industries (Khalil & Zayani, 2022). On the other hand, however, it is important to note that platform-driven personalization such as YouTube and Netflix has simultaneously intensified the structural gap between the Global North and Global South. For example, these data-driven systems produce what Matthew (2020) describes as a 'parallel construction' that constrains user agency by limiting awareness of diverse content, particularly from the Global South. This suggests that personalization in Western-driven media is often shaped by calculated marketing strategies embedded within these digital platforms (Matthew, 2020), which prioritize certain content and limit exposure to alternatives, ultimately reinforcing patterns of cultural homogenization rather than genuine diversity. Furthermore, the author points out that younger generations (i.e., Generation Z) actively participate in using these digital platforms in order to build their own unique engagements with popular cultural consumption and dissemination. Through this process, they play an important role in facilitating the outward flow of Global South content into the Global North. Overall, these chapters show how East Asia is building its own media power to compete with the West, while analyzing how these new digital cultures are reshaping both user identities and global power shifts.

Finally, Chapter 8 suggests the possibility of counter-flows from the Global South to the Global North. It shows how East Asian media is increasingly challenging the established global hierarchies and is changing the global balance of power. Considering these shifts, the chapter highlights the need for non-Western-based approaches to fully understand the growing influence of Global South popular culture and

digital platforms. These perspectives invite a broader rethinking of global media theory by suggesting that East Asia should be understood not as a temporary regional exception but as a structurally significant participant in shaping global media configurations.

Strengths and Contributions

A key strength of the book is its reinterpretation of globalization from an Asian perspective. The author states that globalization should not be understood as a unidirectional process flowing from the West to the rest but should be viewed as a dynamic and negotiated process shaped by regional actors and local conditions. By showing how East Asian media industries and cultural producers actively drive global trends, this book extends 'de-westernization' debates into the world of digital platforms, thereby broadening the scope of current media studies (Shome, 2019).

Another strength is its strong empirical depth, which enhances its credibility for an international readership. Drawing on diverse case studies ranging from the Korean Wave and Japanese popular culture to East Asian digital platforms, the author provides solid and reliable information for understanding the changing world of global media today. For example, the book's detailed engagement with both historical media developments, relevant examples, and contemporary digital platforms demonstrates the breadth of its empirical scope. Therefore, this empirical depth strengthens its contribution to ongoing discussions in global media and communication studies.

However, the volume also raises questions about whether the non-Western media systems and their influence remain sustainable rather than a transient phenomenon (e.g., Longenecker & Lee, 2018; Yoon, 2022). The author suggests that East Asian media must develop long-term transregional flows to maintain global influence by moving beyond short-term pop culture trends

toward a more stable structural presence through broader distribution across regions. For instance, although a few Western countries dominate the digital platform sphere, platforms like TikTok and Naver Webtoon are becoming part of everyday media use in the Global North, indicating both new opportunities and ongoing structural imbalances. This shift requires a strategic rethinking of non-Western approaches to ensure a lasting cultural presence in the Global North. By emphasizing sustainable global influence, the volume highlights the need to recognize East Asia as a structurally permanent and influential actor in the global media landscape.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Global South Discourse in East Asian Media Studies* offers a theoretically grounded and empirically informed intervention in global media scholarship. This volume argues that East Asian media is a key contributor to contemporary global media debates by linking the region's digital transformation and regionalization to a broader rethinking of the non-Western world. At the same time, its reconceptualization of the non-Western world can not only contribute to ongoing academic debates but also expand the scope of global media theory.

In addition, the book can serve as a valuable resource for advanced undergraduate and graduate courses on global media, transnational flows, and emerging digital platforms in East Asia. It also offers meaningful insights for media professionals, policymakers, and media analysts seeking to understand the geopolitical, cultural, and technological transformations shaping the media landscape in East Asia.

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