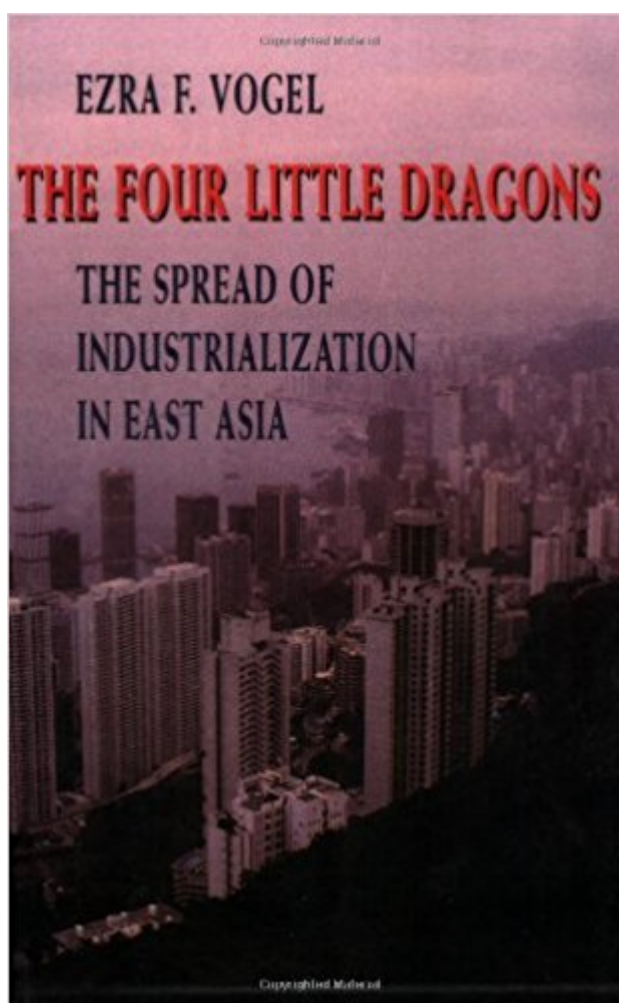


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# The Four Little Dragons: The Spread Of Industrialization In East Asia (The Edwin O. Reischauer Lectures)



## Synopsis

Japan and the four little dragons--Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore--constitute less than 1 percent of the world's land mass and less than 4 percent of the world's population. Yet in the last four decades they have become, with Europe and North America, one of the three great pillars of the modern industrial world order. How did they achieve such a rapid industrial transformation? Why did the four little dragons, dots on the East Asian periphery, gain such Promethean energy at this particular time in history? Ezra F. Vogel, one of the most widely read scholars on Asian affairs, provides a comprehensive explanation of East Asia's industrial breakthrough. While others have attributed this success to tradition or to national economic policy, Vogel's penetrating analysis illuminates how cultural background interacted with politics, strategy, and situational factors to ignite the greatest burst of sustained economic growth the world has yet seen. Vogel describes how each of the four little dragons acquired the political stability needed to take advantage of the special opportunities available to would-be industrializers after World War II. He traces how each little dragon devised a structure and a strategy to hasten industrialization and how firms acquired the entrepreneurial skill, capital, and technology to produce internationally competitive goods. Vogel brings masterly insight to the underlying question of why Japan and the little dragons have been so extraordinarily successful in industrializing while other developing countries have not. No other work has pinpointed with such clarity how institutions and cultural practices rooted in the Confucian tradition were adapted to the needs of an industrial society, enabling East Asia to use its special situational advantages to respond to global opportunities. This is a book that all scholars and lay readers with an interest in Asia will want to read and ponder.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

[Vogel] explains how government and industry have interacted in South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, turning charity case nations into business school case studies. [This book] may be the quickest dose of reality yet for anyone left with a romantic vision of Asia. (David E. Sanger New York Times Book Review) Ezra Vogel...provides a fascinating look at the economies of Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore...This well-documented analysis is recommended as good background reading for those doing business in East Asia and anyone looking for general information about the explosive economic growth in these countries. (Greg Jones China Business Review) What a ride it's been for East Asians, and Vogel captures nicely, in conversational prose, the highlights of the Pacific Rim's 40-year march to industrial greatness in sectors as different as shipbuilding and textiles. It is an achievement that refutes, once and for all, the notion that industrial revolutions only occur in the West. (Davis Bushnell Boston Globe) Ezra Vogel has written an immediately attractive book...[His] account of the spread of industrialization in the four countries is always eminently readable, yet scholarly and authoritative, with just the right amount of sharp detail. (Rupert Hodder Times Higher Education Supplement)

Ezra F. Vogel is Henry Ford II Research Professor of the Social Sciences, Emeritus, at Harvard University and former Director of Harvard's Fairbank Center for East Asian Research and the Harvard University Asia Center.

Ezra Vogel's *Four Little Dragons* is a comparative primer that distills key narratives and lessons from four "Asian miracle" economies. Vogel skillfully narrates the rapid growth episodes of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan in a slim volume. Remarkably, he synthesizes the varied experiences of these late developers, drawing key insights from a rich comparative setting. This guide is a solid starting place for those wanting to understand "what happened." Also--an unfortunately dated cover for a story still worth reading. While concise, and written in an almost aphoristic style, there is no shortage of ideas and bibliographic material. Western scholars can view the Asian growth miracle as one big blob of statist industrial strategies. But paces, policies, and timelines vary, and Vogel's brevity amplifies the differences among the four dragons. For instance, his juxtaposition of Singapore and Hong Kong will frustrate grand theorizers of the post-war Asian

experience and those looking for singular models of structural change. Vogel wrangles insights from these experiences, but you won't find a simple, grand explanation here. His final theoretic chapter is written in a chunky, pragmatic style, much like the preceding case studies, and highlights a number of key takeaways. Common patterns have bite: The post-war era found societal hierarchies reshuffled and old elites were often supplanted. Each regime presided over industrialization with a sense of urgency; trauma undergirded the rise of the region's KMTs or PAPs and binding political threats loomed. Importantly, new political elites had a template for industrialization: Japan's Meiji-era. Finally, as a sociologist, as well, Vogel forcefully highlights the importance of the Confucian past in allowing the four dragons to produce competitive bureaucracies. In sum, *Four Little Dragons* is a great introduction to "what happened" across post-war Asia. Instead of a giant comparative tome or slick theories, Vogel delivers the key issues any scholar of industrialization has to confront. For this reason, *Four Little Dragons* is a great reading for popular economic readers or for a college/graduate course syllabus.

Case studies of the post-war economic development of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. A concise and scholarly work. Though all "Asian," these countries differ, yet each have done well economically. Why so? Vogel offers an answer. I'm writing this, 26 March 1999. East Asia is experiencing extreme economic difficulties, but this does not undo what has occurred nor remove the possibility for future development. If you're doing business in East Asia, *Four Little Dragons* will provide you with a quick read-in to four major players.

While this book was written more than 19 years ago, I still found much relevance in the information found in this book after reading it. The author gives a meaningful explanation of why Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore (little dragons) were able to grow very rapidly over tremendous hurdles while other Asian countries have not. China today continues to dominate the Asian economic headlines but after reading Vogel's book, one can still see how industrialization in a Confucian society makes a difference, even in small dragon countries. In the first half of the book, the author explains how the colonial history and influence Japan imposed on Taiwan and South Korea made a profound impact on their economic development. Technology and socio-political values of early leadership in these small countries are also discussed and given relationship to their historical ties with Japan. In the second half, Hong Kong and Singapore are briefly discussed. Their unique development of growth are summarized by their special circumstances of geographic location and influence by the British. Although the discussion of the last two countries (Hong Kong

and Singapore) were short (about 6 and 8 pages respectively - out of 112 pages), the author does expand on all the countries' asian heritage and common traits in the last chapter. I enjoyed reading the book, finding it historically informative and insightful. The story Vogel presents is clear and structured to explain his opinions, focusing more on past analysis rather than numerical analysis or future trends. While more varied specific examples may have helped to support his views better, the book is just long enough and well written (for the general reader) to make its point.

good deal

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