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“Dismantling Developmentalism: Japanese Political and Economic Struggles after Achieving Success” (updated title)

Professor T.J. Pempel, University of California, Berkeley

From the early 1950s until the early 1990s Japan's political economy was distinguished by its reinforcing combination of conservative political dominance and superior economic growth. The two operated in tandem: economic growth boosted the political appeal of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) while long term conservative dominance facilitated hyper-growth. A close economic and security relationship between Japan and the United States furthered this winning package of ‘developmentalism.’ Yet, conducive external conditions shifted once the capitalist-communist bipolarity ended and global finance shattered Japan’s greenhouse economic practices. Simultaneously, forty years of developmental success unleashed a torrent of domestic demographic, economic and political forces no longer content with past practices. Nevertheless, well-entrenched powers and procedures proved highly resistant to numerous adaptations that might have spurred renewed economic growth and political creativity. Professor Pempel's lecture will explore the interconnections between the successes of the past, the failures of the present, and the challenges that Japan continues to confront.

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